Pentecost 2023

The **context** of the words Jesus speaks in this Gospel is crucial.

* He is with his Apostles at the Last Supper, and he has just explained to them that he will be **leaving**.
* He must go back to his Father.
* He recognizes that this news is **upsetting** to the Apostles.
* They have left everything in order to **follow** Christ, and now Jesus tells them that he is leaving.
* But Jesus then gives them some mysterious news.
* He promises that although he must go back to his Father, he will **not leave them alone**.

Once Jesus is back in heaven, he will be able to stay **closer than ever** to his followers, because he and the Father will send them the "Advocate to be with them always" the "Paraclete", the **Holy Spirit**.

* The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the **love** between the Father and Son lived so **intensely** that he is a person himself.
* When we are baptized, **that same Spirit** takes up residence within our souls, and he brings Jesus and God the Father along with him - because where one is, all three are.
* The influence and action of the Holy Spirit in our lives **increases** when we are confirmed.
* This gift surpasses all other gifts.

In the Holy Spirit, the prophecy of "Emmanuel" (God-with-us) takes on unimaginable proportions: not merely God **among** us, as in the Incarnation, but God **within** us, a **guest** in our souls, a **guide** for our life's journey. This is the gift we celebrate today, on Pentecost. God himself has come to be our **constant companion**in life. What greater gift could Christ have left us?

God has given us the greatest of all Gifts, the Holy Spirit, because he **wants to be our constant companion**, he wants to **guide us through life**, every step of the way.

* And we want the **same thing** - we want to experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
* But we **forget** about God's grace so easily in life's **hustle and bustle**.

What can we do to **stay online with** the Holy Spirit?

I wish I could give you a **magic formula**, like the formulas that crop up in all the self-help books, but I can't.

* Our relationship with God is a **friendship**, not a chemical reaction. It requires an open mine and open heart that must be focused on the Lord himself. It requires a daily Yes, let it be done unto me according to your word! That must be daily.
* And so it takes **constant maintenance**, like any relationship.

It takes being obedient to God's will, prayer, regular confession, nightly examination of conscience (if you think your sinless ask God to reveal the need of true repentence) - but being faithful to those things does not happen without **effort**.

That's why we tend to slack off.

* Life is already **demanding**, and so it's hard to stay **motivated** enough to follow through on our commitment to **excellence in holiness**.
* We can only do so by keeping in mind the **fundamental truth** that underlies everything else: that **God is love**, and that everything he **sends** us, **permits** us, or **asks of us** flows from his love.
* When that truth is firm and fresh, it **feeds** our **prayer and fidelity**.

How can we keep it firm and fresh?

* Gratitude - the rarest flower in the garden of virtues.
* If we take five minutes every day to thank God for his blessings, past and present, we will come to know his love **deeply and truly**.
* Don't take my word for it: **try it**.
* This week, for five minutes a day, write God a thank you note or sit quietly and, in his presence, count your blessings.

If we do, the **flame** of Pentecost that was lit in our hearts at baptism will stop **flickering** and start **burning**.

Come Holy Spirit, inflame our hearts with the fire of Your love. Send forth Your spirit. And renew the face of the earth.

Come to us, O Holy Spirit. Encourage and inspire us to live our lives in the glow of your light. Help us carry our crosses with patience and grow daily in the love of the Lord.

Grant us whatever is best for our salvation and the peace of the world.

Amen.