

Sixth Sunday of Easter
17 May 2020
Saint Marcus Saint Lawrence

Bold, Gentle, Power

Have you ever wondered what happened after Jesus ascended to heaven? What did the Christianity look like? Well this is why Saint Luke wrote for us the Acts of the Apostles! It is interesting to note what the Apostles are summoned to do in today's first reading. They are asked to come down and lay hands on some who had only been baptized, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit.

There was then, in the early Church, already a recognition of the importance of a deeper encounter with the Holy Spirit which was to be given by the Apostles. Someone had sent word to Peter and John that some in Samaria had received the Word of God and been baptized. They saw though, a deeper need to for those neophytes (newly baptized Christians) to receive a deeper encounter with the Holy Spirit with those who had been present with Jesus and had received the Spirit on Pentecost.

Many of us too, have received this deeper grace of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation. This small account given by Saint Luke is the beginnings of what we now call Confirmation. This account from Saint Luke helps to understand Confirmation correctly. Confirmation is just as Acts says, the Laying on of Hands and the giving of the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of this grace is given to us to overcome our human fallenness, weakness, and fear. It worked really well for the Apostles! Just look at Peter as an example, this man who was so afraid to admit he was a friend and follower of Jesus, now after having received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost goes on to preach in huge public gatherings. He takes on the Sanhedrin, and travels around baptizing and giving the Holy Spirit. Ultimately he dies crucified upside down in Nero's circus in Rome. I think the grace of the Holy Spirit worked for Peter and for all of the early Christians.

What does this mean for us? For many of us who have received Confirmation, we do not know the power available to us. We have heard things like, Confirmation is becoming an adult in the Church. Yet that is not what it is. For us as Catholic Christians it goes all the way back to Peter, John and Jesus breathing the power of the Holy Spirit on them!

We can make an inward opening in our hearts and souls to allow the grace of the Holy Spirit to work in us to strengthen us so that we can as the second reading mentions to gently and

confidently give an answer for the hope that lies within us. This power of the Holy Spirit is extremely necessary to live a life of holiness because to be holy we must make sacrifices. That means doing good for others that will cost us. In marriage, priestly life, consecrated life, and our work, it takes strength to be a Christian in a world that tells us to keep our faith to ourselves.

To those who tell us to keep our faith private, I would commend the answer that Saint Peter and Saint John gave the Sanhedrin when they told them to stop preaching about Jesus: “Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judges. It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard.” So hopefully it will be for us! That we have had the privilege of getting to know Jesus so well that we can’t help but speak of him. This is what our isolated suffering world so needs right now: The gentle boldness of the power of the Holy Spirit! Happy Easter!