

## **Pentecost Sunday - May 19, 2024**

### **Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski**

Happy May, the first full month of spring, the month of Mary, May crownings and graduations. Many graduates receive gifts; I recently came across a tale about a graduation gift that I would like to share with you:

A young man from a well-off family was getting ready to graduate from college. For a number of months, he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom and, knowing that his father could well afford it, he told Dad that was all he wanted as a graduation gift.

As graduation day approached, the young man eagerly, yet unsuccessfully, looked for signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on graduation morning his father called him into his private study.

He told the young man how proud he was to have such a fine son, and that he loved him very much. With that, he handed his son a beautifully wrapped gift box.

Curious, but somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible, with his name embossed in gold on the cover.

Angrily, the young man raised his voice to his father and said, "With all your money, all you gave me is a Bible?" He stormed out of the house and out of his father's life.

Many years passed and the young man, not so young anymore, had become a very successful businessman, with a beautiful home and wonderful family. But his conscience began to trouble him because his father was very old and he had not communicated with him in any way since that graduation day so long ago.

However, before he could visit his father, he received word that dad had passed away and had willed all of his possessions to his son.

When he arrived at his father's home, a wave of sadness and regret flooded over him. As he began to search through his father's private study, he came across the still new Bible, right where he had left it so many years ago. With tears in his eyes, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father had carefully highlighted a verse, Matthew 7:11: *"If you then...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him."*

As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with a car dealer's name, the same dealer who had that sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation and the words...PAID IN FULL.

That young man had not recognized the precious gift before his eyes because it wasn't packaged as he had expected!

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the twelve, gathered in fear in the upper room, have the first "Holy Spirit" moment when the Holy Spirit, in the form of wind and flame, comes down upon them. Did they then sit back passively and revel in the good feeling? NO! They boldly went forth proclaiming "the mighty acts of God" to Jerusalem, and eventually "throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth," just as Jesus commanded the Apostles at His Ascension!

We Christians of today are also called, through our baptism and confirmation when the Holy Spirit came down upon us, to use the gifts we have been given to become intentional disciples of Christ and proclaim Jesus' message and rebuild His church. As St. Paul reminds us in the second reading to the Corinthians, we each have "different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit...different forms of service but the same Lord...different workings but the same God."

St. Paul's telling us that we have the same mission even though we carry it out in different ways. It's the same Holy Spirit who inspires and guides each of us. Pentecost reminds us that we need to be roused from the comfort of our own upper rooms. It reminds us that we need to be amazed and that we all have a mission to the world, which begins just outside of these walls. That world is often confused, divided and fearful...a world that waits to be astounded by the mighty acts of God and by the message of hope that only we Christians can bring.

This mission isn't an option; something that we are encouraged to do. Rather, it's a command from Jesus Christ himself, an essential element of our identities as Catholic Christians. While there's nothing wrong with finding comfort in our Cathedral parish community, **we just shouldn't get too comfortable**, for on Pentecost the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit turned that small band of disciples inside-out. Suddenly they were faced, as are we today, with a world waiting to hear the Good News, a world hungering for hope and the Truth.

Yes, I'll admit, this can be frightening (like it was almost fifteen years ago when I started my diaconate formation journey) but when we remember that when we carry God's love and truth to others, we will never be alone for the fire of the Holy Spirit is with us, **if we only welcome the Spirit into our lives**.

Our Cathedral parish community has many needs; we periodically hear during the announcements after Communion the call for various ministers: Greeters, ushers, communion ministers, readers, sacristans, servers, help in decorating this beautiful Cathedral and Morning Glory volunteers. As we open our new Bishop Hogan Center, due to the radical positive change that this new facility will have on the life of our community, we'll have additional needs for catechists, hospitality volunteers, and other ministries of service that haven't even yet been identified. Remember the words of St. Paul: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts - different forms of service." Whether we identify those gifts on our own or others help us identify those gifts that lie within each of us, we're called to use our God-given gifts for the benefit of God's Kingdom on earth...or...we can be like that young man who failed to recognize his father's gift and learn, too late, that the most precious gifts are often not packaged as we expect!