

Welcome, everyone, as we gather to celebrate this Eucharist. A special welcome to any visitors who are here today; wherever you are in your discipleship, we are always happy to join together in worship of Jesus. During this Easter season, we will be hearing in our first readings about the acts of the apostles after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. These accounts are quite a contrast from what we heard during Lent. Before his death and resurrection, the apostles seemed to always misunderstand Jesus: who he was, what his mission was on earth, and what he had to do to bring that about. He constantly had to reprimand them for the false notions they had about him. Even in the gospels that we hear during Easter, where Jesus appears to the incredulous disciples after his death and resurrection, it is clear that they can hardly believe that Jesus has risen, and are even skeptical that it could be true.

Yet now, as we read about these same apostles after Christ's ascension, we would hardly recognize them. They commit great acts of faith, they rejoice when they suffer persecution for the sake of Jesus' name, and thousands are converted to the faith because of their testimony. Suddenly, they've gone from being easily scattered at the first sign of trouble, to being pillars of the Church who eagerly give up their lives for the sake of their faith.

Of course, we know what happened to change them, we hear it in today's gospel. Christ came to them in their fear and their uncertainty, told them to be at peace, and gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, Peter goes from being intimidated by a maidservant who asked if he simply knew Jesus to standing before the chief priests and proclaiming for all to hear that it is only through Jesus' name that we are saved. That is the power of the Holy Spirit.

And it is no coincidence that when the apostles received the Holy Spirit, they felt compelled to go out and preach the name of Jesus, because that is, in fact, the Holy Spirit's mission. What does the Holy Spirit do? He goes and makes disciples of Jesus Christ - that is His mission. I hope that sounds familiar, because that is our mission, as well. The mission of the Church is the mission of the Holy Spirit. If you're unsure of what the Holy Spirit is doing, just look at the Church. The Catholic Church is working to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world – we want everyone to know that Christ is Lord, and that he came out of love for us to save us from our sins.

I think I can safely assume that most of us here, if not every one of us, have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We did so at our baptism when we were washed clean of sin and became members of the Church. And if you are confirmed, you received Him in an even more powerful way, when you were

sealed permanently with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon you, and brought His mission with Him – to help make disciples of Jesus Christ. That is what the gifts we have been given are meant to accomplish.

If you're not sure how to go about that, look to the Church. His mission is our mission. Everything we do is meant to be directed towards making disciples, whether it's fixing the roof or providing a place to pray 24/7 in our adoration chapel. Our ministries are designed to help us grow in our discipleship, to teach the truth of the gospel to our children and to those who are searching, to reach out in charity to those who are suffering and are in need.

They can only happen when we say “yes.” In two weeks, we will have our Ministry Fair after all the Masses, much like we had our Prayer Fair during Lent. There will be information about our ministries and opportunities for you to share your gifts through them. This is an important event, because it will help us determine what ministries we can offer next year – the more people who commit to these ministries, the greater work we can do.

Of course, our lives are busy, and we do have other obligations that we have to tend to. But whatever those obligations are, they must not stop us from responding to what the Holy Spirit compels us to do, to go and make disciples. This is not signing up to coach soccer or drive the carpool, as important as those things are.

This is stepping forward to teach our children about Jesus, to proclaim the Word of God at Mass, to feed the hungry that come to our door. We must give these ministries priority when we look at how we spend our limited time. This is the work of the Church, the work of the Holy Spirit, and so we can be sure that He will work through them to accomplish His mission.

The choice is up to us. I encourage you to go to prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how the gifts He gave you at your baptism and confirmation can be used to help form disciples. My prayer is that He will touch our hearts, and that we will choose to respond, so that the mission of the Church, the mission of the Holy Spirit, will continue to bear fruit, as it has been doing since the apostles first received Him.