

You may or may not remember but last January I gave a homily on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I spoke both on the ordinary and on the extraordinary gifts. Ever since then I have felt moved by God to allow and to promote a more explicit movement of the Holy Spirit in our parish. This doesn't mean that I am looking for anything super-fantastical to happen, but simply to call on the Holy Spirit, to see where He might lead us anew, to be open more fully to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives individually and as a parish.

Now, we have a wonderful parish. We all know that. We are very blessed. There are many wonderful people here, many wonderful families, such a great parish family atmosphere, very welcoming. There is great devotion to the Lord, especially to the Holy Eucharist. Obviously, there is great devotion to coming to Mass and many confessions. But if I had to put my finger on one problem, one struggle that I see as Pastor in the parish it is that with many there is some measure of fear and anxiety in their lives.

I see this manifested in three ways. First, for some there is a general anxiety with life. Maybe an anxiety about their vocation, whether they live it well enough or an anxiety caused by a general lack of sense of feeling grounded in their spiritual life. Probably the source of much of this anxiety is the frantic pace at which many of us live our lives, especially in families. Too many activities, too many worries, no time for prayer, no time for each other. And this yields an anxiety of life which actually leads some to sin.

In a second way, I see this anxiety from many who carry around so many wounds suffered maybe even many, many years ago. Being harshly treated or neglected in a way that has left a lasting impact. Or maybe even abused in some way. Pain from insults or broken relationships. These wounds manifest in some in an anxiety which can lead also to hardness of heart and attitude.

Another aspect of this anxiety manifests in a servile fear of God. Now there is a healthy fear of God, which is good. We heard in the Gospel reading today, "Have you no fear of God?" and our lax world could certainly use more of that. But we can't live in a fear of God as if we were slaves. We are not slaves, but sons and daughters of God.

So I sense that all this anxiety and fear has led somewhat to a stifling of the Holy Spirit, and I believe God wants to heal that in our parish.

In the Scriptures, we read that "Perfect love casts out fear." The Holy Spirit brings us the perfect love of God, and as we allow the Holy Spirit continually to pour into our souls, God's perfect love can drive away our fears, drawing us more fully into the true freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

This is my great hope and prayer for our upcoming parish Mission starting next Sunday night: 4 days of calling on the Holy Spirit to fill us anew, to drive out our fears and to help us live our lives more fully in the burning love of God.

Please take the time to come, whether you are conscious of the fears that I mentioned or not. If you can't come all four nights, come the nights you can, but it will be worth it to block out all four nights if you are able.

As our king, Jesus has many blessings he wishes to give us, above all the gift of the Holy Spirit. Come to the Mission and allow Christ our good king to pour his Holy Spirit upon you anew that you may know more deeply the freedom and joy of being a child of God.

Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on Christ the King, 2016.