

***Pentecost Sunday***  
***May 20, 2018***

*While meeting with them, He enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for “the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1: 4-5)*

*When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Phillip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (Acts 1: 13-14)*

In his General Audience of June 21, 1989, Pope Saint John Paul II asked a particular question concerning these two verses cited above from the Acts of the Apostles: “One might ask: why keep on praying for what has already been promised?” I considered the importance of this question and realized it could also be asked concerning other aspects of our Christian faith. Take for example the question we have heard numerous times here in the “Bible Belt” concerning salvation: “Have you been saved?” If salvation (eternal life in Heaven) is assured by just accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then why should we keep praying or performing charitable deeds? Returning to Pope Saint John Paul II’s question, it would appear to me that the answer is dependent upon the *preparation* needed to receive the promised Holy Spirit.

Clearly our Catholic Church places a great deal of emphasis upon preparation. Parents often attend meetings to prepare for their child’s reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. We prepare our children to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. Young men spend years in preparation to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Couples are guided in their preparation to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony. Pope Saint John Paul II offers a beautiful explanation concerning the Church’s understanding of preparation: “In moments of particular importance the Church acts in like manner. She joins herself to that assembly of the apostles in prayer together with Christ’s mother. In a certain sense she returns to the upper room.” (General Audience of June 21, 1989)

The Church prepares not solely because of the Upper Room. The Church prepares because Jesus prepared. The Gospels speak of His preparation in the desert for forty days and nights before He began His public ministry. It is Jesus Himself who provides us the example concerning preparation because He understood the seriousness of what He was about to undertake. The Church in the Upper Room prepared for Pentecost because it understood the seriousness of the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. We prepare because we realize the seriousness of the Sacraments of the Church and the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. Have you ever noticed that in many parishes, including our own, a priest will be present in the confessional before the Mass to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is done to allow us the opportunity to prepare ourselves to receive the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ wholly present in the Eucharist.

My dear people, the Church in the Upper Room vigorously prayed and fasted in preparation to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Likewise, should we not do the same as we prepare to receive, not only the Holy Spirit, but Jesus Himself at this sacred Mass? Do not forget, you too have received the same Holy Spirit that the first followers of Jesus received. Therefore, allow Him to guide you and prepare you to receive God into your life as you consume Him.