

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit is a gift to the whole Church, but it is also a personal gift to each one of us as baptized Christians. Then comes these interesting questions, What is my personal experience of the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit a concrete part of my being a follower of Christ? How?

Most of the time, we pray to Jesus and to God the Father, but maybe there are times that we seem limited to pray to the Holy Spirit. As we look at the life of the first disciples, "They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." (Acts 2:4) "The crowd of listeners were amazed because they heard them speaking in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God." (Acts 2:11) This is a very clear proof that the Holy Spirit gave them boldness to witness their faith. As Christians and as Jesus' followers, we need this same boldness to witness what God is doing in our lives by fixing our eyes upon Jesus for He is the expression of the greatest love of God in our life.

Jesus was so eager that each one of us may receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus is so excited for us to spread His Word and for the Spirit to spread the Fire of His love. In one moment of Jesus' earthly life, he announced, "I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk. 12: 49) Are our hearts on fire? Are we ready to be bold witnesses of His love? We are invited this week to open our minds and hearts to receive the fire of the Holy Spirit for this is the only way that can change timidity to boldness and never to be afraid in proclaiming our faith in God.

MONDAY

Be brave witness for unity especially to our lost brothers and sisters

Jn. 4:39-42 Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman* who testified, "He told

me everything I have done."40When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.41Many more began to believe in him because of his word,42and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

CCC 820 "Christ bestowed unity on His Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time. Christ always gives His Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ will for her... The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit."

Let us thank our Lord Jesus Christ for entrusting His mission to us. He is very clear that he needs us to help Him in working for the unity of humankind and be one in God. What was the invitation of Jesus that you receive today? The harvest is large but the harvesters are few. Who are the people that Jesus wants you to bring to Him and to come closer to His love?

TUESDAY

Be brave witnesses in spreading the Good News beyond our comfort walls and be one in accordance with plan of God

Acts 8:26-40 Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, "Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route."27So he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace,* that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship,28and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.29The Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join

up with that chariot."30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"31He replied, "How can I, unless someone instructs me?" So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.32This was the scripture passage he was reading:33"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 33In (his) humiliation justice was denied him. Who will tell of his posterity? For his life is taken from the earth." 34Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, "I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this? About himself, or about someone else?"35Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him.36k As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?"37*38Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him.

This witness, then, does not remain closed within the confines of the Christian community: it echoes in all its vigour even outside it, in the social and civil context, as an appeal not to build walls but bridges, not to exchange evil for evil, but to conquer evil with good, offence with forgiveness – a Christian must never say: 'you will pay for this!' Never; this is not a Christian gesture; offence is defeated by forgiveness – to live in peace with everyone. This is the Church! And this is what motivates Christian hope, when it takes a strong line while maintaining love at the same time. Love is strong and tender. It is beautiful. (Pope Francis, General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, Wednesday, 8 February 2017)

Love is stronger than us. We can make it even stronger if we do not go astray from God, the source of love. By being aware of His love in our lives, we become braver witnesses of forgiveness and peace where the foundation is faith, hope, and love and not to forget that the greatest is love. Who are those people

that need your forgiveness? Are you willing to bring peace to them? Let us ask the Holy Spirit that we may continue being instruments of peace to all.

WEDNESDAY

Be brave witnesses by making others great evangelizers for the love of God

Acts 9:10-18 There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord."11The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying,12and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay [his] hands on him, that he may regain his sight."13But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones* in Jerusalem.k14And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name."15But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites,m16and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name."17So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit."18Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized,

How beautiful to have an obedient heart as God wanted for us. Jesus is very clear that He believes in our life, where we can help him make other become great evangelizers of the love of God.

How much time do you spend in listening to Jesus in your prayer?

Are you aware of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as you pray? Are you willing to work with Jesus in the mission? When and where? Do you see that the mission of Jesus is alive and active

in the Verbum Dei Community? Why?

THURSDAY

Be brave witnesses for the evangelization of prominent figures in our society

Ezekiel 37:10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath entered them; they came to life and stood on their feet, a vast army.

Blessed Justo Takayama Ukon: *In a historical first, the Catholic Church has beatified a Japanese samurai warlord, who died in exile after refusing to renounce his Christian faith. Born in 1552, Ukon was a renowned feudal warlord who protected Christians at a time when authorities attempted to stamp out all vestiges of the religion, exiling missionaries and all Christian samurai who would not abandon their faith.*

When Shogun Toyotami Hideyoshi came to power and outlawed the practice of Christianity by an edict in 1614, Ukon refused to follow the great feudal lords and renounce his faith. As a result, he lost his properties, position, social status, and respectability and was eventually forced into exile.

With three hundred other Japanese Christians, Ukon fled to Manila where, just forty days after his arrival, he fell ill and died on February 4, 1615.

Life is beautiful especially if it is used according to its purpose. The Holy Spirit is inspiring us today that as we see the purpose of God in our life there must be no turning back, even to the point of death. Are you willing to die—away from any source of comfort—for the sake of the Good News? How wonderful it is if we can work our way to attaining peace by spreading the love of God with no hesitation, even to the government officials and other prominent persons in society. Let us start with the persons whom we know. Are you determined to work toward peace in Jesus' name, especially these times of crises in our government?

FRIDAY

Be brave witnesses for the Good News even to the point of bearing the hardships to convert hearts of stone to hearts of flesh

Acts 13:44-49 On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.⁴⁵When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.⁴⁶Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles."⁴⁷For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth."⁴⁸The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe,⁴⁹and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region.

One day, when [Brother Juan] Fernandez [companion of Francis Xavier in Japan mission] was preaching, however, one of his [Japanese] hearers came and spat in his face. Showing no emotion, Fernandez withdrew his handkerchief, wiped his face, and continued with his preaching. This act of self-control made such an impression on Uchida, their host, who was present, that he asked for baptism. He and his family were the first to receive it in Yamaguchi. (Matthew Ropp, Francis Xavier and the Land of the Rising Sun)

We are invited not to be afraid to speak boldly of our faith. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle His fire in us in order for us to have the courage to share the love of God. Especially to those in our lives who do not recognize God in their lives. How willing are you to fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit as Verbum Dei disciple? Are you willing to be

sent to the mission where Jesus wants you to go: to your family, school, workplace, and neighborhood? Who are the people whom you know with the heart of stone and never recognize the love of God?

SATURDAY

Be brave witnesses by strengthening the spirits of those who undergo challenges in their following of Christ

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us* and persevere in running the race that lies before us²while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.

We never become brave witnesses if we don't fix our eyes in Jesus and listen to His words more often, for what can we give if we don't have. Let us be open in mind and heart to the words of Jesus in order to understand His ways of encouraging us in our following. In this way, we can also encourage others. Let us be sensitive and be aware of the inspiration that the Holy Spirit is providing us. It is only in our daily prayers that we can receive the grace of strength in our following; in as much as we can also strengthen others as they follow Christ.

SUNDAY

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16
Ps: Psalm 89:2-3, 16-17, 18-19
2nd Reading: Romans 6:3-4, 8-11
Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

“AS THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES, YOU WILL BE BOLD WITNESSES OF GOD’S LOVE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH”

26 June–1 July, 2017

General Theme:

Many began to believe Him because of the word of the woman (John 4:39)

General Objective:

To teach the apostles to accompany the new people with their life and their words based on how Jesus accompanied His apostles after the resurrection.

Objective of the week:

To understand the transcendence of learning how to transmit the Spirit in our mission