

Sunday Thoughts



YEAR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1998

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Second Sunday of Advent

Every valley will be filled in

Third Sunday of Advent

Exult with all your heart

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

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Renewing us with the Holy Spirit

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May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts

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I came forth from the mouth of the Most High

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The Holy Spirit descended like a dove

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It may bear fruit next year

Fourth Sunday of Lent

There is a new creation

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Neither do I condemn you

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Easter Sunday

Renew our lives by the Spirit that is within us

Second Sunday of Easter

Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven

Third Sunday of Easter

We are witnesses to this we and the Holy Spirit

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Lamb will lead them to ... living water

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Now I am making the whole of creation new

Sixth Sunday of Easter

The Holy Spirit will remind you of all I have said

The Ascension
Pentecost

**He was lifted up while they looked on
Each of us in our own native language**

The Most Holy Trinity
Body and Blood of Christ

**The Spirit will lead you into the complete truth
As much as they wanted**

Ordinary Time [2]

Twelfth Sunday of the Year
Thirteenth Sunday of the Year
Fourteenth Sunday of the Year
Fifteenth Sunday of the Year
Sixteenth Sunday of the Year
Seventeenth Sunday of the Year
Eighteenth Sunday of the Year
Nineteenth Sunday of the Year
Twentieth Sunday of the Year
Twenty First Sunday of the Year
Twenty Second Sunday of the Year
Twenty Third Sunday of the Year
Twenty Fourth Sunday of the Year
Twenty Fifth Sunday of the Year
Twenty Sixth Sunday of the Year
Twenty Seventh Sunday of the Year
Twenty Eighth Sunday of the Year
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Thirty Second Sunday of the Year
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Christ the King

**All of you are one in Christ
You were called to liberty
I can boast about the cross
The one who took pity on him
Christ among you, your hope of glory
How much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit?
There is only Christ
Only faith can guarantee the blessings
To bring fire on earth
Last who will be first, first who will be last
Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled
Who can know the intentions of God
Jesus came to save sinners
A teacher of the faith and the truth
Woe to those ensconced so snugly
Fan the gift into a flame
The other nine, where are they
So that it may be known from east to west
God be merciful to me, a sinner
The seal of the living God
We are prepared to die
What sign will there be?
With me in paradise**

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The life that God wants (Second Reading)

The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary at the Incarnation (Lk 1:35) and descended on Jesus at his Baptism (Lk 3:22); his presence in Jesus was a sign that the prophecies were being fulfilled (Lk 4:16-22). The same Spirit is given to us so that we can follow Jesus in his life and mission.

*Lord, send us your Spirit to help us walk in unity of faith
and grow in the strength of his love to the full stature of Christ
who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.*
(Opening Prayer, Mass of Confirmation B)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Every valley will be filled in (Gospel)

In Palestine, the filling in of valleys would be no minor readjustment. The Dead Sea, is the lowest spot on the surface of the earth – almost 400 metres below sea level and the Sea itself is a further 400 metres deep. The Lord's coming will involve a renewal of the face of the earth – the work of the Holy Spirit.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created
and you will renew the face of the earth.*

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Exult with all your heart (First Reading)

Today is known as *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday, when we celebrate the joy we should have in the coming of Jesus to lead us to the endless joy of his Father's house. The Gospel reminds us that this joyful promise demands of us that we change our lives. That joy, which is a fruit of the Spirit is not just in the future.

Paschal joy is not just that of a possible transfiguration: it is the joy of a new presence of the Risen Christ, dispensing to his own the Holy Spirit so that he may dwell with them. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as the inexhaustible principle of her joy as the Bride of the glorified Christ (Paul VI On Christian Joy).

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Gospel)

Because Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, she recognises that Mary is the mother of the Lord. It is the Spirit who enables us to receive the revelation of the Father – ‘he has spoken through the prophets. It is the Spirit who unveils the face and the message of Christ for us, teaching us everything, reminding us of all that Jesus said to us (Jn 14:26).

Lord Jesus, you have sent us the Spirit of Truth to lead us into the complete truth (Jn 16: 13). May our hearts and minds be open to the promptings of the Spirit so that we may recognise you as the Truth and welcome you into our lives.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Renewing us with the Holy Spirit (Second Reading, Dawn Mass)

In the birth of Jesus the Holy Spirit, the personal, infinite love of God, enters the world in a new way. Through the Incarnation of Christ ‘the Spirit is revealed and given, recognised and welcomed as a person’ (CCC 686). The Spirit draws us to Christ, opens our minds to understand his death and resurrection, makes present the mystery of Christ, especially in the Eucharist and sends us out to bear much fruit (cf CCC 737).

When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him. (CCC 689).

HOLY FAMILY

May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts (Second Reading)

Through the sacrament of marriage and through Baptism, the members of Christian families share in the life of the Spirit. The gifts and fruits of the Spirit draw them towards greater unity with one another and with God. The Spirit is present, encouraging and making possible the growth of that love, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health.

*The gift of the Spirit is a commandment of life for Christian spouses and at the same time a stimulating impulse so that every day they may progress towards an ever richer union with each other of all levels – of the body, of the character, of the heart, of the intelligence and will, of the soul – revealing in this way to the Church and to the world the new communion of love given by grace in Christ. (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [On the Family] 19)*

SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

I came forth from the mouth of the Most High (First Reading)

Wisdom comes from the mouth of the Father as his Word and his Breath. In the New Testament we see the Word of God being made flesh (Gospel) and we see the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ sending us the Spirit of wisdom to bring us to full knowledge of him (Second Reading).

The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature: "it belongs to the Holy Spirit to rule, sanctify and animate creation, for he is God... Power over life pertains to the Spirit, for being God he preserves creation in the Father through the Son". (Catechism of the Catholic Church 703; Byzantine Liturgy)

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

The Holy Spirit descended like a dove (Gospel)

The dove with its plaintive cry and soaring flight symbolises the human longings which are being fulfilled beyond all expectations as Christ's mission begins. The gentleness of the dove symbolises 'the good news of peace brought by Jesus Christ' (Second Reading).

We know that the whole of creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom 8: 22,23)

SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

A variety of gifts (Second Reading)

When the Pope visited Limerick he reminded us that, through Baptism and Confirmation every Christian is meant to witness to Christ and to share in Christ's mission. The great variety of the Spirit's gifts should enable us to bring the Gospel into many different spheres of life. That is a task for each of us. There is no such thing as an 'ordinary' lay person.

God sees every one of us; He creates every soul.... for a purpose... He deigns to need, every one of us. He has an end for each of us As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do His work, we must rejoice in ours also. (Cardinal Newman)

THIRD SUNDAY

With the power of the Spirit in him (Gospel)

The chosen people were awaiting the coming of the Messiah, or the Christ, -- both words mean the Anointed One. At his Baptism, God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38). In his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus claims that the text about the one who would be filled with the Spirit was being fulfilled in him (Gospel).

In this way he confessed and proclaimed that he was the Messiah, the one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells as the gift of God himself, the one who possesses the fullness of this Spirit, the one who marks the 'new beginning' of the gift which God makes to humanity in the Spirit (John Paul II, Encyclical on the Holy Spirit 18)

FOURTH SUNDAY

The greatest of these is love (Second Reading)

It is not simply that God acts lovingly or that God approves of those who love others or even that God is the source of our ability to love. All that is true, but, more than that, love is God's very identity. God **is** love. The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts (Rom 5:5).

There is a new humanity which in Jesus Christ through the suffering of the Cross has returned to the love which was betrayed in Adam through sin. This new humanity is discovered precisely in the source of the original outpouring of gifts: in the Spirit who 'searches the depths of God' and is himself love and gift . (John Paul II on the Holy Spirit 40)

FIFTH SUNDAY

Who will be our messenger? (First Reading)

The apostles were experienced fishermen, but they had caught nothing all night. Now Jesus, who was not a fisherman, told them to try again. They trusted him and netted a huge catch. It was an introduction to their new mission whose success would depend not on their abilities but on trusting in him and in the presence of his Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members, to nourish, heal and organise them in their mutual functions, to give them life, to send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. (CCC 739)

SIXTH SUNDAY

Like a tree by the waterside (First Reading)

The name of our patron, Saint Ita, means thirst, thirst for God. Sometimes we seek to satisfy our thirst with possessions or empty pleasure or by looking for popularity. Alas for those who seek their fulfilment where it is not to be found (Gospel). The Holy Spirit is the spring of living water within us welling up to eternal life. (Jn 4:14)

*Holy Spirit, Lord of light / From thy clear celestial height
Thy pure beaming radiance give...
Heal our wounds, our strength renew; /On our dryness pour thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away.* (Sequence of the Mass of Pentecost)

SEVENTH SUNDAY

Even sinners do that much (Gospel)

Jesus speaks of a love which is not calculating. Anyone would be willing to give in the hope of getting a worthwhile return. The love which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5) is an unlimited love. God needs nothing from us. That utterly generous love which we have received is the standard by which we should try to live.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not try to be comforted but to comfort, to be understood but to understand, to be loved but to love. Because it is in giving that we receive, it is in forgiving that we are forgiven, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. (Attributed to St Francis)

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Led by the Spirit (Gospel)

The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness for forty days to face temptations designed to distort his ministry – serving his own interests, seeking political power, putting God to the test rather than going forward in faith. For forty days of Lent the Spirit guides us along the painful road of learning to trust completely in God.

Lord Jesus Christ, by rejecting the temptations of Satan, you taught us to put our trust in your Father's love. May your Spirit guide us to refuse the superficial answers which would obscure your message – seeking food without work, power without responsibility, reassurance without faith.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Jesus went up the mountain to pray (Gospel)

The Gospel of St Luke stresses the necessity of prayer and frequently shows Jesus praying. St Paul tells us that when we do not know how to pray properly the Spirit prays for us in groans that cannot be put into words (Rom 8:26). The deepest truth of our being is a longing for God. There, the Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16)

Prayer is the revelation of that abyss which is the human heart; a depth which comes from God and which only God can fill, precisely with the Holy Spirit. We read in Luke: 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. (John Paul II, On the Holy Spirit 65)

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

It may bear fruit next year (Gospel)

In the Creed we call the Holy Spirit 'the Giver of Life'. God breathes life into the first human being (Gen 2:7). The Hebrew word for spirit also means breath. The life of the Spirit within us bears fruit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal 5:22-23) Lent is a time given to us by God so that we may bear fruit.

In the name of the Resurrection of Christ the Church proclaims life, which manifests itself, beyond the limits of death, the life which is stronger than death. At the same time she proclaims him who gives this life: the Spirit, the Giver of Life; she proclaims him and cooperates with him in giving life. (John Paul II On the Holy Spirit 58)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

There is a new creation (Second Reading)

Lent teaches us to live 'with our heart set on the world that will never end' (Lenten Preface II). We journey towards a Father who is more welcoming than we dare to hope (Gospel). Today is called *Laetare* (Rejoice) Sunday; we travel 'eagerly' (Opening Prayer) towards Easter full of hope, which is a pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1813).

The Spirit is given to the Church in order that through his power the whole community of the People of God, however widely scattered and diverse, may persevere in hope ... The Holy Spirit, given to the Apostles as the Counsellor, is the guardian and animator of this hope in the heart of the Church. (John Paul II On the Holy Spirit 66)

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Neither do I condemn you (Gospel)

We sometimes see repentance as mainly about looking back at the past. Today's readings suggest another priority: 'No need to recall the past (1st Reading), 'I forget the past (2nd Reading), 'don't sin any more' (Gospel). Even more important than recognising our own sinfulness is our acceptance of God's merciful love and the prize to which he calls us (Second Reading).

The Holy Spirit, by showing sin against the background of Christ's Cross in the economy of salvation (one could say 'sin saved'), enables us to understand how his mission is also 'to convince' of the sin that has already been definitively judged ('sin condemned'). (John Paul II On the Holy Spirit 28)

PASSION [PALM] SUNDAY

Father into your hands I commit my spirit (Gospel)

The first words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke speak of his intimacy with his Father (Lk 2:49). His last words express his entry into complete union with the Father, into the glory that he had with the Father from all eternity: 'Father into your hands...'. In that final moment he breathes his last. St John says, 'he gave up his spirit' (Jn 19:30).

The Holy Spirit as Love and Gift comes down, in a certain sense, into the very heart of the sacrifice which is offered on the Cross... Christ receives the Holy Spirit in such a way that afterwards he – and he alone with God the Father – can 'give him' to the Apostles, to the Church, to humanity. (John Paul II On the Holy Spirit 41)

EASTER SUNDAY

Renew our lives by the Spirit that is within us (Opening Prayer)

The risen Jesus fulfils two promises -- the one made by the Prophets to give us a new heart and a new spirit, and his own promise that, if he went away, he would send the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:7) (John Paul II On the Holy Spirit 24). The Holy Spirit is given to us so that we may share in the glorious life of the new: "To be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit" (CCC 683).

*Almighty and ever living God,
your Spirit made us your children, confident to call you Father.
Increase your Spirit of love within us and bring us to our promised inheritance.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Opening Prayer, Monday, Second Week of Easter)*

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven (Gospel).

Sin divides. It upsets the relationship that should link us to God; it distorts our own inner harmony; it sours relationships with other people; it puts us in conflict with the purpose and meaning of creation. The Holy Spirit is the personal love at the heart of God's life. So, from the Spirit comes the unity which undoes the harm of sin. The Holy Spirit brings about unity between us and God, and harmony within ourselves, with one another and with all creation.

*Holy Spirit of God, lead us to the truth which sets us free.
Overcome everything that separates us from one another,
everything that prevents us from becoming what you have called us to
become
and everything in us that fails to welcome the gift of your transforming
love.*

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

We are witnesses to all this, we and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5: 32).

The Apostles preached about Jesus in spite of warnings and imprisonment. In the end most of them died for the truth. We are all witnesses – Pope, bishops and priests, mothers and fathers who are the first teachers of their children, everybody who tries to live as Jesus taught us to do. The Holy Spirit is at work with us, “who causes all creation, all history to flow together to its ultimate end, in the infinite ocean of God” (John Paul II, On the Holy Spirit, 64).

*Lord, fulfil your promise. Send your Holy Spirit to make us witnesses
before the world to the good news proclaimed by Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for
ever and ever.* (Mass of Confirmation)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Lamb will lead them to ... living water (Rev 7:17).

Jesus promised the Samaritan woman that he would give would be “a spring of water, welling up for eternal life” (Jn 4:14). At the Creation, the spirit of God hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2). The Spirit hovered over the river Jordan as Jesus began to his mission (Mt 3:16). We are born again through water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5). The Holy Spirit is “the living water welling up from Christ crucified as its source and welling up in us to eternal life” (CCC 694).

*Almighty Father, through your Son and the Holy Spirit you created the
wonder of creation and the gift of life. Help us to see how much more
wonderful is the life that wells up in us through water and the Holy Spirit.*

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Now I am making the whole of creation new (Apoc 21:5).

People die; hopes are disappointed, friends fall out, causes are betrayed and disappoint. We fear that our hopes are too big. In fact they are too small. The Holy Spirit ensures that human dignity and solidarity will be found again, free of any fragility (Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World 39). Then love will be wholehearted and utterly reliable, sharing in the eternal love of God. The Holy Spirit is the personal expression of that unconquerable love.

*Countless are the things you have made, Lord; by your wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures. When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you give new life to the earth.* (Ps 104:24, 30).

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

The Holy Spirit will remind you of all I have said to you (John 14:26).

The infinite God cares about us; his eternal Son died for us and triumphed over sin and death. These truths reveal a love beyond what any human mind could have imagined or can grasp. We can become used to these wonders; they can become mere words. We constantly need to be opened up to hear the truth. The Holy Spirit breaks open our horizons so that we can see the truth, fresh and joyful and beyond all our expectations.

The Holy Spirit is never really received into our souls except when he disturbs our routine, sets our lives on fire and draws us on to greater courage and sharing in his work for the human race and for the gospel (French Bishops 1979).

ASCENSION

He was lifted up while they looked on (Acts 1:9).

St Luke remembers the story of the prophet Elijah being taken up into heaven. His servant Elisha asked, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit". Elijah replied, "If you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you" (2 Kings 2: 9,10). The apostles, looking on as Jesus was taken from them, were going to receive his Spirit as he promised: "You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit... and then you will be my witnesses (Acts 1:5).

*Almighty God, you have raised Christ to your right hand
and have sent your Holy Spirit into our hearts.
May we understand and fulfil the task which you have given us as
witnesses to your Son.*

PENTECOST

Each of us, in our own native language (Acts 2:8)

The tower of Babel was built by people who wanted to make a name for themselves. In fact greed and pride brought about divisions so that they could no longer understand one another. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit breaks down divisions. Breaking through the barriers of language shows what the completion of the Spirit's work will mean – people of every race and language, every time and culture, proclaiming the marvels of God with one voice.

*Holy Spirit of God, you are the giver of every good gift.
We trust in your power to renew the face of the earth,
gathering all your gifts into the eternal harmony of the new creation.*

TRINITY SUNDAY

The Spirit will lead you into the complete truth (Jn 16:13)

The Father is the maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen. The Eternal Son through whom all things were made loved us even to an agonising death on the Cross. They reveal to us a God who is greater than we can ever imagine. The Holy Spirit is given to us to lead us into the whole truth about the mystery of God's life and to assure us that our hope is not deceptive. We are destined to share that glorious life forever.

*Come, true light. Come, eternal life. Come, hidden mystery. Come,
indescribable treasure.
Come, person whom no mind can comprehend.
Come, happiness without end. Come light without twilight.
Come true hope of all who will be saved. (10th century prayer to the Holy Spirit)*

THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

As much as they wanted (Lk 9:17)

The Eucharist makes present the sacrificial death of Jesus on Calvary. It also points to the future. At the Last Supper, Jesus told the apostles that this meal would be fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Lk 22:15). The feeding of the multitude also points to the promised fulfilment where there will be no more hunger or pain, when all our deepest hopes will be fulfilled, and we will share in the abundant life towards which the Holy Spirit is leading us.

*Come, eternal joy. Come supreme consoler of my poor soul.
Come, sweetness, glory, endless rejoicing.
I thank you for having become for me inextinguishable light, sun that never
sets,
you cannot be hidden because you fill the universe with your glory. (10
century prayer)*

TWELFTH SUNDAY

All of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28)

The Pope has asked us in this year of the Holy Spirit to reflect on the value of unity in the Church. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22). They are what make unity possible. The various gifts given by the Spirit are given to each person to be used for the general good (1 Cor 12:7). The Holy Spirit unites us to one another by making us cry out "Abba, Father" to the one God who is Father of us all (Rom 8:15).

*Grant that we who are nourished by his body and blood,
may be filled with his Holy Spirit,
and become one body, one spirit in Christ.* (Eucharistic Prayer III).

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY

You were called to liberty (Gal 5:13)

Freedom does not simply mean being able to do whatever is most convenient or most pleasant. It means being able to direct one's life and actions according to what one recognises as true and good. Who is most free – the person who can love wholeheartedly and faithfully or the person who is carried away by every passing infatuation and attraction? The highest point of freedom is the ability to love.

*Lord, you give your Son as food to those you anoint with your Spirit.
Help them to fulfil your law by living in freedom as you children.
May they live in holiness and be your witnesses to the world. We ask this
through Christ our Lord.* (Prayer after Communion, Confirmation Mass)

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY

I can boast about the cross (Gal 6:14)

The crucifixion was an act of cruel injustice. Yet St Paul can boast about it, because on the part of Jesus and his Father it was an act of God's infinite love, stronger than evil and death. That love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, showing the way to the God's gift of joys. "In God, all is joy because all is giving" (Pope Paul VI).

*God our Father, through the death and resurrection of your Son you make
all things new.
Your Holy Spirit is the source of the vibrant life and joy of your new
creation.
May we follow your Son's way of self-giving love so that his joy may be in
us
and our joy may be full. We make our prayer through the same Christ our
Lord.*

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY

The one who took pity on him (Lk 10:37)

Pope John Paul speaks of the virtue of solidarity which enables us not just to see the other person in terms of usefulness, but to treat others as our brothers and sisters. The Good Samaritan reaches across barriers to help a Jew who had been attacked. The Holy Spirit heals the wounds of selfishness, prejudice, injustice, ingratitude. The Holy Spirit gives us a share in the life of the Holy Trinity, "which is to love as God has loved us" (CCC 735).

Your Spirit is at work when understanding puts an end to strife, when hatred is quenched by mercy, and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.
(Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II)

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY

Christ among you, your hope of glory (Col 1: 27)

Martha rushes around doing very important things. She is showing hospitality to her guest as Abraham and Sarah did to the angels. In the middle of important things it is possible to lose sight of where we are going. Her sister Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to him. She was listening to the mystery hidden from all ages. Today, the Holy Spirit leads us into that mystery, into the complete truth.

*Lord Jesus Christ, give us, we pray you, the spirit of truth,
sent by you and leading to you,
that we may find the truth in finding you, who are the Way, the Truth and
the Life.*

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY

How much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit..! (Lk 11:13)

The Holy Spirit is God's giving of himself, the source of every gift. He is the Lord, the giver of life. All the fruitfulness of creation is the work of the Spirit of God who moved over the waters as the world was created. Even more, the Spirit is the source (Rom 5:5) of God's gift of love to us who are reborn of water and the Holy Spirit. So when Jesus wishes to express the limitless generosity of his Father, there is no more eloquent way of doing so than to say that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

*Father of light, from whom every good gift comes,
send your Spirit into our lives with the power of a mighty wind,
and by the flame of your wisdom open the horizon of our minds..
Through Christ our Lord. (Mass of Pentecost)*

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY

There is only Christ (Col 3:11)

We are called to prepare for the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 by renewing our hope. This means, on the one hand keeping sight of the final goal and on the other working to transform the world according to God's plan (Pope John Paul *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 46). Every human being is invited to be a member of God's family. The Holy Spirit guides us to the goal where there will be no looking down on others, where we will all be one in Christ.

Fill us with your Spirit through our sharing in this meal. May he take away all that divides us.... In that new world where the fullness of your peace will be revealed, gather people of every race, language and way of life to share in the one eternal banquet with Jesus Christ our Lord. (Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II)

NINETEENTH SUNDAY

Only faith can guarantee the blessings (Heb 11:1)

Jesus promised his disciples to send them the Holy Spirit to lead them into the complete truth (Jn 16:13). Because the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts we have faith: "To be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit" (CCC 683). Through the presence of the Holy Spirit God opens himself to us, and the Spirit "enables the human spirit to open in its turn before... the self-opening of God" (*Dominum et Vivificantem* 58).

God you taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit. Grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord. Amen

TWENTIETH SUNDAY

To bring fire to the earth (Lk 12:49)

John the Baptist foretold that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Lk 3:16). Nothing is the same after contact with fire – darkness is dispelled, cold things become warm, frozen things melt, what is flammable is consumed. "Jesus will say of the Spirit: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled'" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 696). The fire of the Holy Spirit burns away what is empty and false, melts hard hearts, brings the warmth of God's love to a sometimes cold world.

*Holy Spirit, Lord of light, from the clear celestial light /Thy pure beaming radiance give...
Bend the stubborn heart and will; /Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.* (Sequence of Pentecost)

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY

Last who will be first, first who will be last (Lk 13:30)

The widow's few coins were greater than the large offerings of the rich (Mk 12:43). Those who think they are first may turn out to be last. We must not value people in terms of wealth or health or beauty. The contrasts of wealth and poverty that exist in the world are signs of "a fundamental defect... at the root of contemporary economics.. " (Pope John Paul, *Dives in Misericordia* 11). The Holy Spirit frees us from falsehood.

God our Father, send the Spirit of your Son into our hearts, so that we may learn to value people above things, what a person is above what a person owns, to see others not as rivals, but as brothers and sisters who enrich us by their presence (Cf. *Evangelium Vitae* 98)

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY

Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (Lk 14:11)

The heavenly Jerusalem is greater than anything we could imagine (Second Reading). It is, therefore, foolish to think that our own resources could bring us to the goal. The sin against the Holy Spirit is the refusal to accept the gift of merciful love (*Dominum et Vivificantem* 46). "There is no cure for the proud man's malady" (First Reading). We are not ready to receive God's gift until we realise that it is a gift. So it is the humble who will be exalted.

*Almighty God, every good thing comes from you.
Fill our hearts with love for you, increase our faith,
and by your constant care protect the good you have given us.* (Opening Prayer).

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY

Who can know the intentions of God? (Wis 9:13)

The future is always unknown. Our plans are always uncertain. What counts is to trust in the plan of God revealed in Holy Spirit sent from above (First Reading). That means continuing to trust no matter what life brings. We may face the loss of those we love, we may lose our own life. The challenge of Jesus asks whether we are ready to carry the cross as he did.

*Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
I give thanks to you, O Lord my God with my whole heart,
and will glorify your name forever.* (Ps 86:11,12)

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY

Jesus came to save sinners (I Tim 1:15)

The formula of Absolution says that God the Father has 'sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins'. After the Resurrection, Jesus said to the Apostles; 'Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven' (Jn 20:22,23). Even when we fall short, God remains faithful to his promise. He sends the Holy Spirit to give us a share in Christ's life, the life which is the very opposite of sin (Cf. CCC 734).

Lord, send your Spirit among us to cleanse us in the waters of repentance. May he make of us a living sacrifice so that in every place, by his life-giving power we may praise your glory and proclaim your loving compassion. (The Rite of Penance)

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY

A teacher of the faith and the truth (I Tim 2:7)

Every Christian is meant "to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation" (Vat II, *Ad Gentes* 11). That witness is meant to be seen in every facet of life – in families and communities, in politics and economics, in work and recreation. The Gospel can transform these realities if lay people "exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often buried and suffocated" (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 70).

God our Father, you send the power of the gospel into the world as a life-giving leaven. Fill with the Spirit of Christ those whom you call to live in the midst of the world and its concerns; help them by their work on earth to build up your eternal kingdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. (Opening Prayer, Mass for the Laity)

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY

Woe to those ensconced so snugly (Amos 6:1)

The wealthy are condemned not for being wealthy but for not caring about the fate of others. The Christian virtue of *solidarity* sees others as 'the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit.' (John Paul II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 40).

Father, you have given all peoples one common origin, and your will is to gather them into one family in yourself. Fill the hearts of all with your Holy Spirit, the fire of your love, and the desire to ensure justice for all their brothers and sisters. (Mass for the Progress of Peoples).

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY

Fan the gift into a flame (2Tim 1:6)

Timothy had been appointed to lead the Church in Ephesus. He had received by the laying on of Paul's hands the gift of the Holy Spirit which made the apostles able to carry out their mission. But the advice to fan into a flame the gift of the Spirit applies to all Christians. Through Confirmation we are strengthened by the gift of the same Holy Spirit. If we were more aware of that gift might there be less of 'a spirit of timidity' about our lives?

God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent your Spirit on your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel: now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe.. (Opening Prayer, Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit)

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY

The other nine, where are they? (Lk 17:17)

Nine of the people who had been cured failed to give praise and thanks to God. They were not unusual. St Paul complains about of those who "knew God and yet they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him" (Rom 1:21). The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray as we should (Rom 8:26). And it is the Holy Spirit who gathers us into the unity in which we offer all honour and glory to the Father through, with and in Jesus Christ (Eucharistic Prayer).

Merciful Father, you have sent into our hearts your Holy Spirit, the giver of life and of every good gift. May the same Spirit join with our spirit to bear witness that we are your children and to give you thanks and praise. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY

[Mission Sunday]

So that it may be known from east to west (Is 45:6)

The Holy Spirit is at work in the entire mission of the Church. Those who witness to the Gospel do so because the Spirit is within them. The Spirit is also at work in those who hear (Pope John Paul, *Redemptoris Missio* 21). The purpose of mission is to enable people to 'to know the one God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent' (Jn 17:3), to live in God a life 'which can develop and flourish only by the Spirit's action' (John Paul II *On the Holy Spirit* 58).

We cannot be content when we consider the millions of our brothers and sisters, who like us have been redeemed by the blood of Christ but who live in ignorance of the love of God. For each believer as for the entire Church, the missionary task must remain foremost, for it concerns the eternal destiny of humanity and corresponds to God's mysterious and merciful plan. (*Redemptoris Missio* 86)

THIRTIETH SUNDAY

God, be merciful to me, a sinner (Lk 18:13)

The Pharisee in the Gospel tried hard to do the right things. But his virtue was fatally flawed. He boasted about how good he was, as if he deserved the credit. We are saved by the gift of God so that no one can claim the credit (Eph 2:8). Everything we have, we owe to the merciful love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. "We hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own" (2Cor 4:7).

It is about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults constraints, persecution and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong. (2Cor 12:9,10).

ALL SAINTS

The seal of the living God (Apoc 7:2)

We are already the children of God (Second Reading) because the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts. Jesus teaches us to call God 'Abba', ('Dad'), a term of such intimacy that the chosen people would never use it. The Holy Spirit is the seal that marks us as part of God's family, the pledge, the first instalment (Eph 1:13-14, Rom 8:23) of God's life which we will share when we join with all the saints in his glorious life.

God our Father, on this feast of all the saints, we celebrate the final and perfect flowering of the gifts your Spirit gives. As we honour the saints, may the Holy Spirit fill our lives with a rich variety of gifts. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY

We are prepared to die (2 Mac 7:1:2)

The Holy Spirit leads us into the truth (Jn 16:13) and into freedom (2 Cor 3:17). They go together. What would be the point of freedom if we chose what was not true? What would be the point of knowing the truth if we did not choose to act on it? The martyrs freely proclaim the truth, even with their lives. The first martyr, Stephen, was full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace and power (Acts 6:1,8). Our century has seen more martyrs than any other in Christian history.

May the Lord turn our hearts towards the love of God and the fortitude of Christ (Second Reading).

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY

What sign will there be? (Lk 21:7)

The people in the Gospel want to interpret their situation. Our situation carries the risk losing confidence in the possibility of arriving at the truth about fundamental questions. We rightly respect other people's religious and moral beliefs, but this does not mean that one belief is as true as another. Believing that it is possible to arrive the truth is the essential condition for real dialogue (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* 92). Christ is the Truth which the Spirit makes present in every time and place (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 44)

*Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Truth that sets us free.
May we listen to your Spirit and so understand what you ask of us on our journey to your Father's house.*

CHRIST THE KING

With me in paradise (Mk 11:10)

Every Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. This final Sunday of the liturgical year focuses especially on his ultimate triumph at the end of time. Everything in heaven and on earth will be gathered in him, into the glorious life which he has already entered. It will be the completion of the Spirit's work of renewing the whole of creation.

*Everything which will happen until the end of the world will be no more than an extension and unfolding of what happened on the day when the battered body of the Crucified Lord was raised by the power of the Spirit and became in turn the wellspring of the Spirit for all humanity (John Paul II *Dies Domini* 75).*