

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate the birthday of the Church this Pentecost weekend, it is good to think about gifts. Every birthday is celebrated with gifts. The gifts we receive on our birthdays say something about the love of family and friends. It is exciting to open the gifts hidden behind the beautiful wrapping and bows. Often I have thought that the giver of the gift is an even greater gift than what is in the package.

During Pentecost we celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit that enabled the Apostles to go out and proclaim the gospel in foreign languages so that everyone could understand what they were saying. Because of their bold proclamation, over 3,000 people were baptized that day. The Church was born, and we are still growing to this day.

How has the Holy Spirit blessed our lives? What gifts have we been given? Of course we think of the traditional gifts of the Holy Spirit found in the book of the Prophet Isaiah: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord. We consider as well the gifts of the Holy Spirit found in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: Preaching with wisdom, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Recognizing spirits, Speaking in tongues and the Interpretation of tongues. All of these gifts found in Sacred Scripture point to how the Holy Spirit blesses our lives so that we can live as faithful followers of Christ. Which gifts are the most important to us? For which of these gifts are we most grateful? Would we receive and open a gift without being grateful for it? Or, would we just open the gift and put it in the closet and forget that it is even there?

There is yet another way for us to consider the Pentecost gifts; not the gifts we receive, but the gifts that we are. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not limited to the fifteen items listed in the paragraph above. We too, are gifts, we all have something special to offer. We have the gift of faith that identifies us as disciples, followers of Jesus Christ. We have special talents to offer that bring hope, joy, healing and peace to the world. Our

presence in the Eucharistic Celebration is pure gift because we become what we receive; the Body of Christ alive and present in the world.

You are a gift to me. I am so grateful that I am here in this parish. I look at all that we have accomplished over the last three-and-one-half years. I think about how much effort people have put in to all the committees and commissions which offer support and advice in decision making processes. I think about how hard the staff in our parish works. We try to be good servants and stewards in so many areas, especially in religious education, music, and many other administrative tasks. The buildings and grounds which have needed so much work are starting to look incredibly beautiful. I have seen people come together and work hard to serve the needs of this parish. I am humbled by the generosity parishioners have shown in helping people in need, paying for the new elevator, generously stocking the food pantry and in offering comfort to those who grieve. St. Catherine of Genoa is a great parish endowed with many tremendous gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given in great abundance to us, and we use them well. You are all gifts of the Holy Spirit that bring great life and love to the Church.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel