

**Homily Outline for the Vigil Mass of Pentecost prior to the
Sports Faith International Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony**

**Saint Patrick Catholic Church
Lake Forest, Illinois
June 4, 2022**

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- I. Photo-bombing is a recent craze in which a person tries to get into someone else's photograph.
 - A. It is mostly a bit of harmless fun, and with so many people using mobile phones to take pictures of themselves, photo-bombing is easy enough.
 - B. Often it happens intentionally. My brother Allen is infamous in my family for getting his mug into many of our family photos.
 - C. It may also happen accidentally. At the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, Queen Elizabeth II was passing behind two hockey players taking a selfie when she inadvertently photo-bombed them. At least, it was assumed to be an accident, although the Queen did have rather a mischievous smile on her face.
 - D. Although photo-bombing may seem like an entirely modern phenomenon, it does have some roots in history.
 1. Long before the days of photography, Renaissance artists liked to include themselves, or their clients, in paintings of religious subjects.
 2. Some people disapproved. King Philip II of Spain certainly did. Philip was a great patron of the arts, and he asked an artist known as El Greco the vast interiors of his new home, the royal palace, which also had the feeling of a monastery.
 3. The trouble was that the king had very decided tastes, and Philip felt uncomfortable when El Greco depicted members of the king's family, including the king himself, in a painting of saints and angels adoring the Holy Name. He liked his religious paintings "pure."

4. El Greco did not receive any further royal commissions from King Philip, but it did not stop him. In his enormously tall canvas depicting the day of Pentecost, the artist placed himself in the same room as Our Lady and the apostles.
 5. Pentecost is the Solemnity we celebrate today, and El Greco depicts the scene as described in the *Acts of the Apostles*, with tongues of fire coming to rest upon the heads of each of the friends and family of Jesus. And there is El Greco, gazing out of the picture quite unapologetically, as if to say, "Here I am, alongside Our Lady and the apostles, celebrating this great birthday of the Church in company with them."
 6. He understood that the coming of the Holy Spirit was no private affair. This outpouring of God's love was like an explosion and by all accounts it sounded like one. The noise was so loud that a crowd of foreign pilgrims in Jerusalem came rushing to find out what was going on. The apostles were only too eager to tell them. What an amazing gathering that must have been – yet in all the commotion, no one was left out, for the apostles found themselves able to communicate in the language of each one of those international visitors.
 7. El Greco was not being sacrilegious when he included himself in the Pentecost scene, even when he painted one of the tongues of fire resting upon his own head. Anyone who loves Jesus is beloved of God: God will come to that person and make a home with him. None of us, then, should think of Pentecost as past history, or as someone else's celebration, one in which we have no right to take part. We should see ourselves in that picture!
 8. El Greco evidently experienced the power of God's love for himself. For one thing, there is no ceiling in his painting. It felt to him, perhaps, as if, with the coming of the Spirit, earth and heaven had somehow blended into one.
- II. After Mass this evening, Sports Faith International will have their Dinner and Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony for this year's honorees.
- A. Founded in 2008, Sports Faith International is dedicated to effecting positive cultural change by showcasing the virtues of exemplary athletes, coaches, and teams.
 - B. In recent years, our Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony has been preceded by Mass on the Vigil of Pentecost, a fitting occasion as we celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we receive initially at baptism and then in their fullness at Confirmation when we are fully initiated as members of the Catholic Church.

- C. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. These gifts are for our spiritual growth.
- D. We also receive the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. These fruits, like fruit on a tree, are meant to feed us. These fruits of the Holy Spirit feed us spiritually.
- III. In our Gospel today (John 7:37-39), Jesus says, “Rivers of living water will flow within him who believes in me.”
- A. This fulfills the prophecy we heard from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel in our first reading (Ezekiel 37:1-14), that God would bring life into our dry bones by bringing His Spirit into us.
1. As athletes, we know that our bones and muscles need to be energized by spiritual motivation.
 2. I have completed 24 marathons, and each time I crossed the finish line was an accomplishment of the spirit as much, if not more, than an accomplishment of my body.
 3. Body and soul – the physical and the spiritual – are one unit until we die, but we also look forward to the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Our Lord, when our souls will be reunited with our bodies in glorified form.
- B. If we want the workings of the Holy Spirit to grow and flourish in our bodies and souls, we should fix our attention on three fundamental points: docility, the life of prayer, and union with the Cross of Christ.¹
1. The word “docility” comes from the Latin *docere*, to teach. To be docile does not mean simply being passive, but being teachable. Are we willing to learn from the teachings of the Holy Spirit?
 2. “In the second place, a life of prayer, because the giving of one’s self, the obedience and meekness of a Christian, are born of love and lead to love. And love leads to a personal relationship, to conversation and friendship. Christian life requires a constant dialogue with God. ... Let us acquire the habit of conversation with the Holy Spirit, who is the one who will make us holy.”²

3. “And finally, union with the Cross, because in the life of Christ, the Resurrection and Pentecost were preceded by Calvary. This is the order that must be followed in the life of any Christian. ... The Holy Spirit comes to us as a result of the Cross – as a result of our total abandonment to the will of God, of seeking only His glory and the renouncing of ourselves completely.”³
4. In conclusion, let us make our own the petitions sung in the Sequence of the Mass for Pentecost:

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!*

...

*In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.*

*O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill!*

...

*On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend:*

*Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia.*

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God* (London: Scepter, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 611-612.

² St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, p. 136.

³ St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, p. 137.