

### Living the Mystery of Pentecost in Mary's School

- Scriptural Passage
  - A reading from the Acts of the Apostles: “While meeting with the apostles, Jesus 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.’” When they had gathered together they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. They returned to Jerusalem. When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip 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. When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.” The word of the Lord.
- Introduction
  - After the Ascension, the apostles all gathered around Mary, to pray. Why to pray, and why around her? Well, first the Lord, as we just heard, told them to pray. Before he ascended in heaven, he instructed his apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” Jesus said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” And they were faithful to his promise and they prayed. They huddled around Mary and prayed the first day. Then the second day. Then the third. Fourth. Fifth. They prayed all together nine days, until, while praying on that ninth day, the wind blew open the windows of the Upper Room and the Holy Spirit came upon them as tongues of fire. That was the first nine-day novena of prayer in Church history. The Church has been praying novenas ever since, including the one we are now making to her under the title of her Immaculate Conception.
  - Why around Mary? That’s what tonight’s talk is about, as we’ll focus on how Mary wants to help us to obtain what the Pentecost mystery contains, to help us live docilely according to the Holy Spirit. We’ll focus on seven reasons.
- Mary shows us how to live overshadowed by the Holy Spirit
  - In the Annunciation, after she asked how it was possible for her as a virgin to become a Mother, the Archangel Gabriel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”
  - Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit not just at the Annunciation but throughout her life and she never sought to run away from that shadow. She had so much to teach the apostles about being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and has so much to teach us. The Christian life is to live under the guiding protection of the Holy Spirit who came down upon Jesus in the Jordan and rested on him, who came down upon the apostles and rested upon them in Pentecost. She was best equipped to teach them how to respond because she was the one with the greatest experience of how to live a truly charismatic, a truly pneumatological, a truly spiritual life.
- Mary shows us how to pray.

- Mary is without a doubt, the greatest example of a human being who prays the world has ever known. So many times in Sacred Scripture, we see her listening attentively to the Lord, treasuring his words in her heart and then putting them into action. When a woman cried out from the crowd one day to Jesus, trying to bless his mother on account of her physical relationship to Jesus, “Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breasts that nursed thee,” Jesus replied with the real reason for Mary’s beatitude: “Blessed rather is she who heard the word of God and kept it.” The woman from the crowd wanted to bless Mary simply for her physical relationship to the Lord, from whom he received his human flesh and blood. Jesus wanted to bless his mother for her real discipleship, hearing the word, treasuring it and putting it into practice. One of the fathers of the Church used to say that before Mary ever conceived the Word of God in her womb, she had already conceived the Word of God in her heart. She listened and treasured the Word of God so much that that word became flesh within her. He took on her flesh. This is the model of prayer: to listen attentively to the Lord, to know that he hears us, to know that he wants to have this interpersonal dialogue with us, to treasure his words, to trust his words and to act on them. The apostles huddled around Mary because she could teach and show them how to pray with the same attentiveness, receptivity, docility and response that she did.
- The Holy Spirit is the great helper for us in our prayer. St. Paul tells us, “The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.” The way the Holy Spirit helps us is that he has been poured into our hearts in such a way that we cry out, “Abba, Father!” What this means is that the Holy Spirit’s assistance — exemplified in Mary’s life — is not so much in helping us speak in tongues, is not so much in putting words on our lips or even in our hearts, but in changing us as we pray, so that we may pray not as fearful supplicants but as much beloved sons and daughters of the Father. St. Augustine used to teach that the Holy Spirit changes not so much the *quid ores* (what you say when you pray) as the *qualis ores* (how you are as you pray). He helps us to relate to God as trusting children. Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount that if earthly fathers know how to give good things to their children, how much more he would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Lk 11:13). God responds to all our petitions fundamentally by giving of himself, both as the greatest gift of all but also as a means to help us to continue to relate to God as we ought and turn to him with filial confidence.
- Mary teaches us as the daughter of Zion how to open ourselves up to God’s paternity that is intensified through the Holy Spirit’s assistance in prayer. She teaches us how to pray as we should, as beloved sons and daughters of God, trusting in the Lord’s work. It’s key for us to be as docile to her help as the first apostles were.
- Mary shows us how to correspond to the Holy Spirit’s help in remembering what Jesus taught
  - Jesus said during the Last Supper, “The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name — he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.”
  - Mary is the great teacher of what Jesus has taught. So much of the Gospel we know only because of Mary, helped by the Holy Spirit, related stories to the apostles and other disciples who repeated them and eventually wrote them down. She likely spent much time during the nine days preceding Pentecost passing on the story of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, the Finding and so many details of Jesus’ hidden life.
  - Mary doesn’t tell us the stories the same way she told Peter, Andrew, James and John, but she does want to help us to enter into those mysteries of her school, cooperating with the Holy Spirit. St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal” (2 Tim 2:8) and the apostle Jude added, “Remember the words spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 17). Mary teaches us this type of memory, which is a totally different one than memorizing phone books like Rain Main did. It’s interiorizing what was said. It’s treasuring it. It’s remembering not so much with the mind, but with a contemplative heart, and that’s what Mary shows us. She did so by the help of the Holy Spirit and wants us to open ourselves to the same graces.
- Mary shows us how to be faithful and docile to God the Holy Spirit’s direction.

- The apostles grouped around the Mother of God because she was and is the greatest model and example of docility and fidelity to the Lord, no matter what happened. She was the faithful 14 year old girl whose “yes” replied to Eve’s “no” and set in motion the plan of redemption. She was faithful in her mission to raise the Son of God, to protect him, to nourish him. She was faithful in the contradictions of the massacre of the Holy Innocents and of the Nazareans trying to murder him by throwing him off a cliff. Mary was the faithful one all the way to the Cross, where she was one of very few to be present, even though it must have been so much more revolting for her to see her crucified than it would have been even for his apostles. She watched as the hands that used to grip her finger were hammered to the wood of the Cross; she watched as the feet, which once couldn’t walk, couldn’t walk again. She watched that side that she used to bathe pierced by a lance and bathed in blood. But she was faithful to the very end. The apostles learned from her how to be faithful and docile disciples of her Son, because she was the first, greatest and most docile disciple of all. In order to be an apostle, you first have to be a disciple, and they learned that trusting discipleship from her.
- Her example is very instructive because often God’s ways are not our ways, including what we think would be most for God’s glory. The Holy Spirit often surprises us by allowing certain things to happen we could never expect. For example, in the Acts of the Apostles, when St. Paul wanted with his companions to spread the Gospel to parts of Turkey called Asia Minor and Bithynia, the Holy Spirit “prevented” them (Acts 16:6). But he prevented them only because he wanted them to go to Macedonia, to Europe (Acts 16:9). Likewise, we might never have thought God the Father would allow Jesus to be crucified, but he did in order to bring about the salvation of the world. Mary helps us to learn how to say “fiat” to God’s will even in those occasions in makes no sense.
- Mary shows us how to become a Temple of the Holy Spirit
  - St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians reminds us of one of the central realities of the Christian life: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ... The temple of God, which you are, is holy.” He says later, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.”
  - No one can show us better how to be a temple of God than the one who was the tabernacle of the incarnate Lord for the first nine months of his life. None can show us better how to glorify God in our body than the one who carried God herself. We invoke her “Ark of the Covenant” because she is the one who bore within the New and Eternal Covenant and she can show us and help us to do the same.
- Mary shows us how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s gifts
  - Earlier this year, Pope Francis spoke to us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to teach us, as Mary did, the practical impact the Holy Spirit is supposed to have in every Christian’s life. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit — all flowing from the one Gift who the Holy Spirit is — respond to seven essential needs that a human person has in life in general and in the spiritual life in particular. Mary is the one who shows us best how to cooperate with these gifts. The gifts of the Holy Spirit [listed in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah about Isaiah himself, later about Jesus and finally about each Christian sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit] are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.” The Pope took us one-by-one to examine each of those gifts by which the Holy Spirit seeks to help us to seek, think, act and live as Christians. Mary, again, is our exemplar in living by them.
  - The first gift is the gift of Wisdom
    - We call Mary the Seat of Wisdom precisely because she was the one who looked at everything from God’s perspective.
    - Pope Francis tells us, “Wisdom is precisely this: it is the grace of being able to see everything with the eyes of God, ... to see the world, to see situations, circumstances, problems, everything through God’s eyes.” He notes, “Sometimes we see things according to our liking or according to the condition of our heart, with love or with hate, with envy.... No, this is not God’s perspective. Wisdom is what the Holy Spirit works in us so as to enable us to see

things with the eyes of God. ... When we are in communion with the Lord, the Holy Spirit transfigures our heart and enables it to perceive all of his warmth and predilection.”

- The gift of Wisdom helps us to see things as they really are and to live in the real, real world. A lot of times we spend our time living in a transitory world where we place our hearts in money and things, in pleasure and entertainment, trying to exercise power and control. The Holy Spirit’s gift of Wisdom helps us to see that this is vanity. He also helps us to see that sometimes the greatest value comes from things that the world rejects, that the Cross is the Christian’s “power and glory,” that suffering is a means to unleash love, that losing one’s life, rather than seeking to preserve one’s life, is the path to fruitfulness and happiness.
- By this gift, Pope Francis says, “The Holy Spirit makes the Christian ‘wise,’ not in the sense that he has an answer for everything, or that he knows everything, but in the sense that he ‘knows’ about God, he knows how God acts, he knows when something is of God and when it is not of God; he has this wisdom that God places in our hearts.” Pope Francis reminds us that “we can all have” this gift. “We only have to ask it of the Holy Spirit. ... It cannot be learned: it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must ask the Lord to grant us the Holy Spirit and to grant us the gift of wisdom, that wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God’s eyes, to feel with God’s heart, to speak with God’s words.”
- For us to grow in wisdom, we sit in the lap of her who is the “seat of wisdom.”
- The second gift is the gift of Understanding
  - This is the gift Mary used to help the apostles and the early Church prepare for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.
  - Pope Francis says, “We are not dealing here with human understanding, with the intellectual prowess with which we may be more or less endowed. Rather, it is a grace that only the Holy Spirit can infuse and that awakens in a Christian the ability to go beyond the outward appearance of reality and to probe the depths of the thoughts of God and his plan of salvation.”
  - The gift of understanding is not a higher IQ in terms of quantum physics but it is a higher spiritual IQ in terms of the things that matter most. It’s an ability to see behind what’s occurring, to grasp connections. “This of course does not mean,” Pope Francis adds, “that a Christian can comprehend all things and have full knowledge of the designs of God: all of this waits to be revealed in all its clarity once we stand in the sight of God and are truly one with Him. However, as the very word suggests, understanding allows us to ‘*intus legere*,’ or ‘to read inwardly’”: this gift enables us to understand things as God understands them, with the mind of God. For one can understand a situation with human understanding, with prudence, and this is good. But to understand a situation in depth, as God understands it, is the effect of this gift.”
  - Pope Francis gives a couple of examples to help us to understand how much we need this gift. “One can read the Gospel and understand something,” he stated, “but if we read the Gospel with this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can understand the depths of God’s words. And this is a great gift, a great gift for which we all must ask and ask together: Give us, Lord, the gift of understanding.”
  - He said that what the Holy Spirit wants to do in us through this Gift is what Jesus himself did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Holy Spirit “opens our minds, he opens us to understand better, to understand better the things of God, human things, situations, all things.”
  - The Pope exclaims, “What a beautiful gift the Lord has given us. It is the gift with which the Holy Spirit introduces us into intimacy with God and makes us sharers in the plan of love which he has for us.” But he also calls us to ask for what God wants to give us. “Let us ask it of the Lord, that he may give us, that he may give us all this gift to understand the things that happen as he understands them, and to understand, above all, the Word of God in the Gospel.”
  - Mary is the one who shows us how to read inwardly and to treasure in our heart what we read!

- The third is the gift of Counsel, which is also called prudence or right judgment.
  - Mary is the “Mother of Good Counsel” and the “Virgin Most Prudent,” to help us to receive and follow God’s advice.
  - Pope Francis describes how all of us need advice at various times of our life: “We know how important it is in the most delicate moments,” he says, “to be able to count on the advice of people who are wise and who love us. Through the gift of counsel, it is God himself, through his spirit, who enlightens our heart so as to make us understand the right way to speak and to behave and the way to follow.”
  - The Holy Spirit is the wise Counselor who comes to abide in us to help us to make the right choices and help to guide others to the right aligning of means toward good ends.
  - The way this gift works in us, Pope Francis says, is by helping us to attune our consciences to God. “When we receive and welcome him into our heart, the Holy Spirit immediately begins to make us sensitive to his voice and to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our intentions according to the heart of God. At the same time, he leads us more and more to turn our interior gaze to Jesus, as the model of our way of acting and of relating with God the Father and with the brethren. Counsel, then, is the gift through which the Holy Spirit enables our conscience to make a concrete choice in communion with God, according to the logic of Jesus and his Gospel. In this way, the Spirit makes us grow interiorly, he makes us grow positively, he makes us grow in the community and he helps us not to fall prey to self-centeredness and one’s own way of seeing things.”
  - Pope Francis says that to receive this help of the Holy Spirit’s counsel, we need to do two things.
    - The first is prayer, which he calls the “essential condition” for preserving it this gift. “In intimacy with God and in listening to his Word, little by little we put aside our own way of thinking, which is most often dictated by our closures, by our prejudices and by our ambitions, and we learn instead to ask the Lord: what is your desire? What is your will? What pleases you? In this way a deep, almost connatural harmony in the Spirit grows and develops within us and we experience how true the words of Jesus are that are reported in the Gospel of Matthew: ‘Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak but the spirit of your Father speaking through you’ (10:19-20). It is the Spirit who counsels us, but we have to make room for the Spirit, so that he may counsel us. And to give space is to pray, to pray that he come and help us always.”
    - The second condition is docility to his teaching us through others by means of the Church. “The Lord does not only speak to us in the intimacy of the heart,” Pope Francis clarifies. “He also speaks to us through the voice and witness of the brethren. It is truly a great gift to be able to meet men and women of faith who, especially in the most complicated and important stages of our lives, help us to bring light to our heart and to recognize the Lord’s will!” He does this often through the work of parents and godparents, through great teachers, through priests in the confessional in spiritual direction and even in the pulpit, through good spiritual books, CDs, and videos, thorough adult education courses and other means. Pope Francis encourages us, “Always ask for the gift of counsel,” because the Holy Spirit wants to give himself to us in this way.
  - Mary’s always praying for that gift for us and the Mother of Good Counsel shows us how to cooperate with it.
- Fortitude, or courage, is the fourth Gift
  - Mary is the “Queen of Martyrs” and therefore the real queen of courage, the courage that helped her to stand, not faint, at the foot of the Cross, faithful to her Son to the last. She is a momma bear with the courage to stomp on the head of the devil for us her children.

- Pope Francis says that the Holy Spirit “always comes to sustain us in our weakness and he does this by a special gift: the gift of fortitude.... Through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit liberates the soil of our heart, he frees it from sluggishness, from uncertainty and from all the fears that can hinder it, so that Lord’s Word may be put into practice authentically and with joy. The gift of fortitude ... gives us strength.”
  - Courage, as I like to say, is not the absence of fear, but the gift of the Holy Spirit and virtue that helps us to do what we should do despite our fears — the fear of failure, the fear of suffering, the fear of criticism, the fear even of death.
  - Pope Francis says that we need this gift in extraordinary and in ordinary situations. “There are difficult moments and extreme situations in which the gift of fortitude manifests itself in an extraordinary, exemplary way. This is the case with those who are facing particularly harsh and painful situations that disrupt their lives and those of their loved ones. The Church shines with the testimony of so many brothers and sisters who have not hesitated to give their very lives in order to remain faithful to the Lord and his Gospel. Even today there is no shortage of Christians who in many parts of the world continue to celebrate and bear witness to their faith with deep conviction and serenity, and persist even when they know that this may involve them paying a higher price. We too, all of us, know people who have experienced difficult situations and great suffering. Let us think of those men, of those women who have a difficult life, who fight to feed their family, to educate their children: they do all of this because the spirit of fortitude is helping them.
  - “We need, [however,] not think that the gift of fortitude is necessary only on some occasions or in particular situations. This gift must constitute the tenor of our Christian life, in the ordinary daily routine. ... We need to be strong every day of our lives, to carry forward our life, our family, our faith. When we face daily life, when difficulties arise, let us remember this: [St. Paul’s words] ‘I can do all things in him who strengthens me.’ The Lord always strengthens us, he never lets us lack strength. The Lord does not try us beyond our possibilities. He is always with us” so that we can recognize, “I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”
  - Sometimes, he says, “we may be tempted to give in to laziness, or worse, to discouragement, especially when faced with the hardships and trials of life. In these cases, let us not lose heart, let us invoke the Holy Spirit so that through the gift of fortitude he may lift our heart and communicate new strength and enthusiasm to our life and to our following of Jesus.”
  - Mary responded to the Holy Spirit’s help to lift her heart to God and to follow her Son with strength and enthusiasm. She wants to help us to do the same.
- Knowledge is the fifth gift
  - “When we speak of knowledge,” Pope Francis states, “we immediately think of man’s capacity to learn more and more about the reality that surrounds him and to discover the laws that regulate nature and the universe. The knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, however, is not limited to human knowledge; it is a special gift, which leads us to grasp, through creation, the greatness and love of God and his profound relationship with every creature.”
  - “When our eyes are illumined by the Spirit,” he continues, “they open to contemplate God, in the beauty of nature and in the grandeur of the cosmos, and they lead us to discover how everything speaks to us about Him and His love. All of this arouses in us great wonder and a profound sense of gratitude! ... The Spirit leads us to praise the Lord from the depths of our heart and to recognize, in all that we have and all that we are, an invaluable gift of God and a sign of his infinite love for us. ... It is in this perspective that we manage to accept man and woman as the summit of creation, as the fulfillment of a plan of love that is impressed in each one of us and that allows us to recognize one another as brothers and sisters.”
  - What Francis says about how the Holy Spirit helps us to see how creation is connected to the loving plan of the Creator so that we never forget this intrinsic connection, also helps us with the truths of our faith, so that we may remember them and grasp their connection to his saving plans. It’s in this way that the Holy Spirit reminds us of what Jesus taught so that

we may connect our created life in all its parts to him. Pope Francis calls us always to ask for this gift. Mary, as we see in her *Magnificat*, was able to praise God for all he is and has done, in creation at the beginning, and in the re-creation through her Son.

- The sixth gift is Piety, which is also called reverence.
  - Mary is the “singular vessel of devotion” of God and teaches us how to become likewise one who adores the Lord always.
  - Pope Francis says this gift “touches the very heart of our Christian life and identity” but it is also often “misconstrued or treated superficially, ... because some think that to be pious is to close one’s eyes, to pose like a picture and pretend to be a saint.” That’s not what piety is. The gift of piety, he says, “indicates our belonging to God and our profound relationship with Him, a bond that gives meaning to our life and keeps us sound, in communion with Him, even during the most difficult and tormenting moments.” It points to a “relationship lived with the heart,” our “friendship with God ... that changes our life and fills us with passion, with joy. Thus, the gift of piety stirs in us above all gratitude and praise. This is, in fact, the reason and the most authentic meaning of our worship and our adoration. When the Holy Spirit allows us to perceive the presence of the Lord and all his love for us, it warms the heart and moves us quite naturally to prayer and celebration. Piety, therefore, is synonymous with the genuine religious spirit, with filial trust in God, with that capacity to pray to him with the love and simplicity that belongs to those who are humble of heart.”
  - It’s the gift of reverence that helps us to find joy in prayer and Eucharistic adoration, in receiving God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance, in the awesome privilege we have to hear God speaking to us in the words of Sacred Scripture and feeding us with himself. How much our age needs this gift to be able to give God not only his proper place but the love he deserves!
  - This gift of reverencing God, of learning how to treat him as he deserves, also changes the way we reverence and treat others. “If the gift of piety makes us grow in relation to and in communion with God and leads us to live as his children,” Pope Francis says, “at the same time, it helps us to pass this love on to others as well and to recognize them as our brothers and sisters. ... The gift of piety means to be truly capable of rejoicing with those who rejoice, of weeping with those who weep, of being close to those who are lonely or in anguish, of correcting those in error, of consoling the afflicted, of welcoming and helping those in need.” St. Paul calls all Christian spouses to “reverence one another out of reverence for Christ,” because they’re able to grasp that the other is beloved by God and made in his image and likeness. A similar type of reverence is meant to pervade all our relations, because we’re never greeting a mere mortal but someone so precious to God that he gave his own life to save that person’s. The gift of piety also helps us to have greater reverence for ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit, of taking good care of our body and soul. “May the Holy Spirit grant to all of us this gift of piety,” Pope Francis concludes. The Holy Spirit endowed Mary with that gift and she responded fully, showing us the way.
- The final gift is the gift of awe of the Lord
  - Mary is the Refuge of Sinners and helps us to avoid sin precisely by giving us an awe of offending God, and that leads us to a deeper understanding of this gift, which Pope Francis says “does not mean being afraid of God: we know well that God is Father, that he loves us and wants our salvation, and he always forgives, always; thus, there is no reason to be scared of him! Fear of the Lord, instead, is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands. This is fear of the Lord: abandonment in the goodness of our Father who loves us so much. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, he infuses us with consolation and peace, and he leads us to the awareness of how small we are, with that attitude — strongly recommended by Jesus in the Gospel — of one who places his every care and expectation in God and feels enfolded and sustained by his warmth and protection, just as a child with his father! This is what the Holy Spirit does in our hearts: he makes us feel like children in the arms of our father.”

- “The gift of fear of the Lord is also an “alarm” against the obstinacy of sin. When a person lives in evil, when one blasphemes against God, when one exploits others, when he tyrannizes them, when he lives only for money, for vanity, or power, or pride, then the holy fear of God sends us a warning: be careful! With all this power, with all this money, with all of your pride, with all your vanity, you will not be happy. No one can take it with them to the other side: not the money, power, vanity or pride. Nothing! We can only take the love that God the Father gives us, God’s embrace, accepted and received by us with love. And we can take what we have done for others.”
- This is not a fear of punishment but a holy awe of God that leads us not to want to do anything that would displease him because we love him so much. We need this gift often because he helps us to avoid being presumptuous with God. We can think that our sins really don’t offend him or we can only detest our sins because of the consequences of disorder and pain it introduces into our lives, into others’ lives and into our eternal life, but the gift of holy fear of the Lord helps us to avoid sin out of a deep love for God such that we wouldn’t want to displease him in the least way. The difference between a fear of punishment (what the Portuguese would call *medo*) and a fear of displeasing a loved one (*temor*) which is the proper understanding of the term “fear” in this Gift of the Holy Spirit we all learn as we’re growing up. At the beginning, we might be afraid of being grounded or spanked or otherwise punished by our parents if we do something wrong. But over the course of time, as we learn truly to love our parents, our “fear” changes, because we no longer care as much about the consequences of our misdeeds to us but rather to them. That’s the type of fear we should have with regard to God. We are his sons and daughters. By being called Christians, we are supposed to be “little Christs.” The fear of the Lord is the flip side of the gift of piety, whereby we never want to do anything to fill him with shame, but rather want to do everything we can to please him.
- Mary helps us to seek to do everything we can to please God and never to offend him. Through her Immaculate Conception, she in fact never did offend God through sin and she’s interceding for us that through grace we may offend him less if ever.
- Mary show us how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in spreading the faith
  - The final of the seven ways Mary shows us how to be docile to the Holy Spirit is through sharing the Good News. We see the results of Mary’s help and the power of the Holy Spirit in this mystery. 53 days before Pentecost, the apostles were all gathered together in the Upper Room. Jesus washed their feet and instructed them about true service. He gave them his body and blood for the first time. He ordained them priests so that through them, he could give us that same body and blood. He prayed for them to His Father, that they might be one, that the Father would protect them from the Evil one, that they might be consecrated in the truth, and that all those who would hear the Gospel through their lips might be one, too (Cf. Jn 17). But what happened when they left the room? They all went out and abandoned the Lord — right after Mass, right after receiving the Lord Jesus within, right after their priestly ordination! Judas sold Jesus, valuing him less than 30 pieces of silver. All 11 of the other apostles ran away from the garden terrified. Peter, for whom the Lord had prayed personally (Lk 22:32), denied three times even knowing Jesus (Mk 14:71). All but St. John were still hiding the next day as Love personified was being tortured and killed upon a Cross. Jesus had prepared them for three years about what would happen to Him and what they were called to do, but none of that preparation, none of Jesus’ prayers, not even the sacrament of the Eucharist, sufficed to keep them faithful. Something was missing.
  - On Pentecost we see the Apostles return to the same Upper Room. Jesus has ascended to heaven, and so the apostles huddle around his mother not for a holy hour, not for a day, not for a long-weekend, but for four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine days — not knowing how long they’d be there — in order to learn from her about Jesus, to learn from her how to pray, to learn from her how to say yes to God. This time they leave the Upper Room and begin to preach the Gospel fearlessly. Three thousand people were converted that first day. The same apostles who had scattered like frightened children in the Garden were now gathering God’s children together for Christ. The same Peter who denied even knowing Jesus in order to keep himself warm by the courtyard fire, was now



on fire confessing that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of the Living God. The disciples who were too ashamed to appear at the foot of the Cross now boldly and proudly proclaimed God's love seen by Christ's death on that Cross. What was different? The combination of Mary's help and example, the confidence that came from seeing Jesus risen and ascended, and most especially the Holy Spirit's power worked a moral miracle in the apostles, changing them from chickens to shepherds, from cowards to courageous martyrs, from apostates to apostles.

- Tongues of fire came down and rested upon each of them and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came down upon them as tongues of fire — tongues because they were to speak, fire because they were to speak with the passion of burning love. They received the Holy Spirit's help boldly to proclaim Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles had begun. The Church was born.
- Mary can show us how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in sharing Jesus with others because she was the one who had been proclaiming the Gospel since she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation. As we ponder in the mystery of the Visitation, she brought Jesus to change the life of Elizabeth, Zechariah and John the Baptist forever; John leapt for joy; Zechariah gave his *Benedictus* after listening to her for several months describe God's wonders; Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Spirit to praise her before she in turn praised God with her *Magnificat*.
- Mary wants to help us spread the faith as well. If the Holy Spirit could work such wonders with those coarse fishermen and tax collectors, then surely he can do similarly great things through us if we allow him. We have so many more advantages than they did in terms of education, in terms of social communications, in terms of travel, in terms of grace, since many of us, unlike them, have been Christian from just after birth. If by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they were able to leave the Upper Room on Pentecost differently than they did on Holy Thursday, then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we, too, can turn from cowards to heroes, from apostates to apostles, from sinners to saints. The key is allowing the Holy Spirit to act and Mary wants to help us.

- Conclusion

- We finish by turning with Mary to her Son in the Holy Eucharist before us. Benedict XVI said five six ago in Australia, "The Eucharist is a 'perpetual Pentecost' since every time we celebrate Mass we receive the Holy Spirit who unites us more deeply with Christ and transforms us into Him." Jesus always wants to send us the Holy Spirit just like he did when he gave his body and blood to us for the first time. He wants to fill us with fire, a fire that will overflow into all parts of our life, the very fire he came into the world to bring. He wants the Holy Spirit to change us the way he changed the apostles on that first Pentecost. Our Immaculate Mother is now praying for us for precisely that outcome. And so with her we cry out, "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the real fire of your love!" "Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth, beginning with us!"