

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 3, 2010

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Good morning. The Second Reading today is almost half of what my book is based on so we can't pass it up today and it is talking to St. Timothy today. Now Timothy, remember, was a bishop. He was a priest, a bishop, a disciple, with St. Paul. He was like the spiritual son of St. Paul. Paul has to remind him again and again, here he is a bishop and a priest, and he still needs reminded not to be complacent. Not to just go through the motions. Not to be happy with the status quo. So he reminds him, "Let me remind you to stir into a flame the gift that we gave you when we laid our hands upon you." So what he is saying is listen you have been given the Holy Spirit but it isn't enough to be given the Holy Spirit. You have to use the Holy Spirit. You have to fan the flame into a fire. Wesley one of the great Christian preachers and my own self and what I have been doing throughout the years, often people wonder where do you get all of your energy? Last week when I was at the parish down in Virginia people would come up and say, "Father you know you have a little too much energy." I said, "Shut up! I am fifty. I can still get all excited." "Where do you get the energy from?" It is the same place Wesley got it from. It is from the Holy Spirit. Wesley use to say that "the Spirit of the Living God will set you me on fire and people come to watch me burn." And that has to us that we in our daily lives have to have this surrender. You know just showing up at Mass on Sunday doesn't make you a Christian. It isn't enough. It isn't even beginning to be enough. To be a follower of Christ means that Christ lives His life in you and through you. The way that happens is through the Holy Spirit. So what has to happen in our hearts is this daily surrender and the fanning into a flame the gift that God gave us when we were Baptized and Confirmed.

Every one of us here has the Holy Spirit. But most of us never use Him. I would say that 90% of Catholics do not surrender their selves to the Spirit of God. We are not talking about being Charismatic. We are talking about a daily full surrender to the Holy Spirit like John Paul the II had. Like Michael Scanlon had. Like a lot of people who are Saints. That is where it came from. When you and I surrender every day to the Holy Spirit and it can be something as simple as a prayer to the Holy Spirit. It can be Spirit of the Living God I surrender myself to you today. Use me for your glory. Spirit of the Living God set me on fire today and let people come watch me burn. It can be the old Spirit prayer. Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of Your faithful people and enkindle the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and we shall be recreated and You shall renew the face of the earth. We need to do this and that is what Paul is reminding Timothy. "You must do this bishop. You must do this priest. If you are going to be a faithful follower, you must do this." And then he goes on to say, "The spirit that God has given us is no cowardly Spirit," in the old translation that I like better but, "no spirit of cowardice." And the old translation said, "but a spirit that is strong, loving and wise." This translation which you heard today says, "of power, love and self-control," all the same reality. When you and I come and we surrender ourselves daily to the Holy Spirit, that is so necessary because if not we are doing things under our own power.

The Word of God says, "We cannot pray as we ought." So the Word of God says you can't pray. You might be praying the last 80 years. "I pray every day Father." Well, you make the Spirit a liar because He said, "You can't pray as you ought." So the Spirit, Himself, speaks and works through our weakness and prays inside of us. So if you really want to have a good prayer life, begin it by surrendering it to the Spirit of the Living God. Let the Spirit of the Living God pray inside of you and through you. Again, it takes a

surrender. God does not force Himself on you. He invites Himself and you have to respond by a daily giving up to the Holy Spirit. And when you and I do it says that we are not cowards. We don't walk around in weakness. We don't walk around defeated. We are not defeated. We have power, love and self-control.

When the Parish Council got together two meetings ago I asked them to put together... you know it is a great council. Everybody is doing what they are supposed to be doing. It is unbelievable. They are doing phenomenal. So they came together and they met a couple of hours without me and they put together something and of course I didn't like it so they were all frustrated. I said, "Let us do it together, huh?" So we came and spent over an hour and a half the other day and we focused on, and it came from them, where is God calling us? What would be the byline of our parish? And the new byline that we are going to have on all of our stuff pretty soon is, "Life begins here. Know the power." Life begins here. Know the power. It is not a very ecstatic words there. It is dynamic. It is alive. Life begins here in this church with the Eucharist, with Baptism, again and again with someone going to Confession. Life begins in the Sacraments. Life begins in Jesus Christ. Life begins here in these walls. And when you have true life you are going to know the power of God. That is what it says today. When you have the Spirit of God in you it is a Spirit of power. Now it is not a Spirit of power that says, "Look at me I am very powerful." Remember in the Acts of the Apostles when Jesus says, "I want you to go and pray. And when you go pray the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will receive power," for what? Is anybody here alive? "You will receive power and then you will be My witnesses." Oh dear! You will be witnesses. So the power that we are given from God is to witness to God. So when people look at you and me if we are on fire by the Holy Spirit they will see God and we will be a witness.

Another word for witness, people of God, is what? Martyr. That means you and I die to our selves, the Spirit sets us on fire and the Spirit of God witnesses to the power of God in our lives. It isn't something that consumes us. It is kind of like the image of the burning bush. You know the burning bush? God was present. God was burning in that bush but was the bush consumed? No. When we are set on fire by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God will consume us but not take us away. He will make us more alive, on fire and He will give us the power to witness. So that means when you are at work, when you are with your family, the very life you and I live if we are surrendered to God's Spirit will witness to God and not ourselves. So think about it – have you witnessed to yourself, to your family, your power, your position this past week? Or have you witnessed to God? When people look at you do they see God burning inside of you? If not, it is because you have not surrendered. You are trying to do this Christianity thing under your own power. You can't do it. You are going through the motions. I don't care if you come here every Sunday. If they are not seeing Christ in you then there is a problem. Then what we need to do is every day for the rest of our lives, starting today, surrender to the Holy Spirit every day. May they see you today. Let them see you. That is the power that God gives us.

The second thing is love. When the Spirit of God gives us Himself it is a Spirit of Love. When you and I are people who are fully engaged in the Holy Spirit and surrendered we become the presence of God in the world. That means that if God is love, then we become love in the world. Now again love doesn't mean you become a la la. You know love is sometimes hard. Sometimes love is kicking someone in the butt. Love is sometimes, when they are trying to manipulate you saying, "You are not going to manipulate me." "Ooh I am mad." "Well, get mad. I will not let you do this." It isn't becoming a walk mat for everyone to walk on. But what it is, is that you are willing freely to give your life up for others. You

want them to go to heaven. You become a person that has this love inside of you and me and that means ultimately we want them to go to heaven. We don't give into their every whim. Well I am mad at Father because he doesn't give into my every whim. Sorry. I am not here to give into your every whim. I am here to get you to heaven. What has to happen to all of us when we have this daily surrender to the Holy Spirit we will do everything in our power to get each other to heaven. We will lay down our life gladly for others.

The last thing is called, what was that in the Scriptures today? Self-control. I think the number one thing America does not have is self-control. We are one of the fattest nations on the earth including the pastor, because we don't want to say no to ourselves. We love to give into our every little whim. We give into ourselves. "I don't want to say no to myself. I love myself too much." Really? It is not an act of love when you give into every whim. It is an act of killing yourself. It is not an act of life it is an act of killing yourself. When we have the Spirit of God within us we get this self-control that we learn discipline in our lives and the first discipline all of us must have is the discipline of prayer. It must be a discipline of prayer. When you and I try to do it under our own power we don't get to pray every day. "Well we try Father. I try. Oh, I don't know. I just can't seem to do it." Because you are trying to do it under your own power. When you have the Spirit of God then you will have that discipline of daily prayer. You will have discipline in your life. And you will have discipline to say no to sin. To not give into every whim that kills you but to learn to self-control yourself so that the Spirit of God may live more fully in you. Remember I used the example the other day? If I have a glass here and the glass is filled and God wants to give you liquid gold, you cannot do it because the glass is filled. If you come before him with self-control and an empty glass then He can give you everything. If you and I come to God everyday filled with self and my wants and my desires and my needs, the way I am going to do things, there is nothing that God can give you. He wants to give you everything but He can't because you are too filled with self. When we learn self-control we say no to self, no to self, no to self, the more of life, the more of grace, the more power, the more love can be poured into your heart. But it is a discipline, it is a self-control that you are not always filling yourself up you are emptying yourself out so God can fill you with Himself.

So the key that God is telling us today is that every one of us here must fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when you were baptized. You must use it. You must fan it into a flame. And when you do that when you have that daily surrender to God's Holy Spirit, you will be a person of power, of love and self-control. When you do that you will bring life to yourself and life to the world. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.

