

7th Sunday of Easter – Cycle A

May 28, 2017

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Good Morning and how are you?

Today, most of the United States celebrates Ascension Thursday. I don't know how you can do that -- celebrate Ascension Thursday on a Sunday -- but that's what the Bishops did. We, in Pennsylvania and New York, and about six different regional dioceses, celebrate this Sunday, which I think is better.

But anyway, as we focus on this Sunday, in the midst of praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon us in Pentecost, (which is next weekend, as we'll celebrate our 150th anniversary, which is so appropriate), what we need to focus on is the last line of the first reading today.

The last line of the first reading today talks about the apostles – “*And they dedicated themselves ...*” To what? Do you remember? Prayer. Very good. But, “*...they dedicated themselves to prayer with Mary.*” That's the most important part of this! And as we are praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit in our own lives – that the outpouring of a new Pentecost will come upon each of us, individually, and us as a parish for the next 150 years – we recall this very picture up here of the Pentecost [signals to wall].

And when you look at it, at the center of all the apostles praying, was Our Lady. It's interesting that the Word of God says they prayed “*with Mary*”. And that's the same with all of us – we don't pray *to* Mary, we pray *with* Mary. The only one you pray *to* is...Who? God! Period! That's who you pray *to*. So, a lot of times, we say, “pray to Mary” or “pray to the saints”, but that's not the real way we should say that. We should be talking to them, in communication with them, because they exist in Christ. They're alive because of Christ! But we pray *to* God and we pray *with* the saints, and we pray *with* Our Blessed Mother. And it's interesting because, when we focus on Mary – and I just want to do that because we've come to the end of May, the month dedicated to Her – Mary is the one who is an instrument of salvation to us. Right? If she would have said no when the angel said, “Will you be the Mother of God?”, could She have said, “No”? Of course! She had free will! But she said “Yes.” So, as Mother Teresa used to say, “No Mary, no Jesus.”

That if she would not have said, “Yes,” the Second Person of the Trinity would not have become man and we would not have called Him *Jesus*. Now, God had a plan from the beginning and He knew what would happen, but He still trusted her and He took her free will. And then we know that the very first gift, the very first miracle happened because of Mary, her intercession. And we know that the very last gift given to us was Mary, when Jesus was on the Cross. And, so, the power of Mary interceding for us, praying *with* us, is something we should be doing in our daily lives. The best way I can explain the role of Mary is like my cheater glasses. I put my cheaters on so I can better see the print when I'm praying or whatever I'm doing. Mary is like a pair of cheater glasses, if you will, or any glasses. You don't get stuck on the glass; you look *through* the glass to get a clearer picture. Nobody looked at Jesus more than Mary in His lifetime. No one spent more time looking at Jesus than Mary. And so we put her on, if you will, as a pair of glasses, so that we can come to see Jesus and love Jesus more fully.

So, I just want to ask you the question during this time that we're in the midst of – this prayer for the Holy Spirit, “Are you praying *with* Mary?” I know you are if you're doing a novena because in the daily novena, you say an Our Father, Hail Mary, and seven Glory Be(s), but you always do it *with* Mary. And if you don't have a devotion in your own life *to* Mary, please, you're missing so much! Who was the most devoted person to Mary in all of history? Jesus Christ! And if Jesus was devoted to Mary, don't you ever think you can outdo Christ in your devotion to Our Mother. That when you have Her, as She formed Jesus in His humanity, so She'll form us that we, too, may be great saints for the Glory of

God. May each of you know God's love, and Mary's, today and forever. Amen.