

Daily Homily
Sixth Week of Easter: Thursday
18 May 2023
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All through my life up until the second or third year of priesthood, today was a Holy Day of Obligation. Today would have been Ascension Thursday. However, in some parts of the world – not all – and in some parts of our nation – not all – the bishops moved this major feast of Easter to a more important day. The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord was moved to Sunday. This Sunday we will be celebrating this feast, but it originated on Thursday.

Today marks forty days since Easter Sunday and tomorrow marks nine days till the Solemnity of Pentecost Sunday. The Gospel for the Ascension is the last bit of advice Jesus offers to the Apostles before he ascends before their eyes back into Heaven. He tells them to go back to Jerusalem, pray, and wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nine days later, this gift is bestowed up them.

It took nine days. What did they do within those nine days? Nine days back in that upper room where the Last Supper was celebrated, where they all came together in hiding, where the Risen Christ stepped in their midst and offered peace. Now it becomes a room where they just wait. What did they do? Well, they must have prayed and reflected and talked. They must have wondered, what is this gift, what is this Holy Spirit that Jesus speaks of? They must have held all this in prayerful thought.

Nine days. This is where the Catholic Church developed her spirituality of Novenas. The word Novena means, nine days. It is nine days of intentional prayer, like the Apostles in that upper room. Nine days of praying for the gift. Nine days of praying for something to happen. Nine days of hoping for God. Throughout the years, the Church has developed all sorts of Novenas, however, the Novena to the Holy Spirit is the first and the oldest.

I would encourage you to pray this Novena. I think there is one posted on our parish website. You can also spend these nine days being more mindful of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit and praying for them to be more fully integrated into your life. However, you spend these nine day, spend them in intentional prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to come more fully into our world and into our lives.