

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 27 & 28, 2017

All Saints Parish, Syr., NY
Sr. Maureen D'Onofrio

A woman was asked by a co-worker, "What is it like to be a Christian?"

I wish we were in the season of fall to make her response more meaningful because the woman replied, "To be a Christian is like being a pumpkin!"

God picks you from the path, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you.

Then God cleans out all the yucky stuff inside the pumpkin. God removes all the unhealthy seeds of doubt, hate, greed and then carves a new smiling face, and best of all, puts a **light** inside of you to shine for all the world to see! Christians are called to be people of light!

We are in one of the most exciting liturgical times of the years. This past Thursday we celebrated the Ascension of Jesus into heaven and next Sunday we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. And let us not forget on this Memorial Weekend, those men and women who served in our Armed forces to protect us and for the many who gave the supreme sacrifice of their lives so that you and I could live in freedom!

But lets back up a bit. I'm going to invite us to use our imagination and picture ourselves among those disciples with Mary in that upper room...what must have been going on in their minds during those nine days between the Ascension and Pentecost? Their preparation for receiving the Spirit was **prayer**. Those nine days are the oldest and most important novena in the Church. You and I in our parish have been given this wonderful novena of prayer to prepare ourselves, as those disciples did with Mary, for the coming of the Spirit. So these are special days of prayer for us...didn't we hear in today's gospel how Jesus prayed for those he left behind to carry on his work, . He said, "It is better for you that I should go." Sr. Macrina Widerkehr wrote: "I understand so clearly what Jesus is saying. There is a time when we must depart: child from parent, student from teacher, disciple from guide. We take what we have learned, find our wings

and fly!”and that is the call for you and me to do likewise! We need to find within ourselves the courage and strength to take the lessons learned and go with it!

Remember, when Jesus died, the apostles were like sheep without a shepherd. They were lost, sad and wounded in spirit. During the passion they learned some uncomfortable things about themselves. If they thought they were brave and strong, they quickly learned they were cowardly and weak. Jesus knew well they needed strengthening! That was why he told them to do nothing until they received power from on high. They needed the Holy Spirit to lift their broken spirits and breathe new life into them!

Like the disciples, we all have experiences which makes us aware of our own weaknesses. A sudden illness or a death of a loved one; a serious car accident or a tragedy in the family brings us face to face with our powerlessness and mortality. We may even find that we are not capable of the simplest prayer at this time.

But by virtue of our Baptism, we are bound up in God in such a way that the intricacies of our lives are filled with divine energy! You and I are “enlightened” by the One who is the Light of the world, who fills us with that energy.

And for me, that energy within us is the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit!

So what about the spirit within us? The spirit within us is extremely important and here I'm speaking of our own spirit. Think about the everyday expressions we use that includes the word “spirit.” We may talk about a person being low in spirit or high in spirit. We talk about a person giving a spirited performance or a person having a joyful spirit, or a generous spirit, or sad to say, a mean spirit. We are acknowledging the importance of the spirit within us. **The human spirit is more powerful than any drug!** Our spirit is our most precious possession. Sometimes we hear of a person who is so low in spirit that when sent to a doctor for a physical, the doctor can find absolutely nothing wrong. Somehow that person is not lacking physical nourishment but truly lacking nourishment for their spirit. So what enables the spirit within us to soar and what is it

that causes it to plunge?

Sadness weighs it down but **joy** lifts it up.

Criticism erodes it but **praise** will build it up.

Failure shrinks it; **success** enlarges it.

Despair causes it to wilt but **hope** breathes new life into it.

Rejection wounds it but **acceptance** heals it.

Hatred poisons it but **love** purifies it.

Fear cripples it; but **solitude** calms it; and most of all **prayer** strengthens it

Let's return to that upper room with the disciples and Mary. They truly **became a small community** as they prayed together and supported each other while the waiting went on.

Barbara Fiand in her book, **In the Stillness You Will Know**, states “that maybe the togetherness that the disciples craved after the ascension of Jesus was community drawn together out of loneliness. Perhaps that is why Jesus left them. Perhaps it was his way of having them encounter the Spirit. Perhaps he hoped that they might find each other more authentically in the longing of their hearts.”

Our community of All Saints is gathered together in our own upper room prayerfully preparing for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit within us.

And like that pumpkin, may God's light shine upon us for all the world to see and may the Spirit of the living God truly fall afresh on each one of us.