

The readings in our liturgy this week end are anticipating the upcoming feast of Pentecost. Soon we will celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the disciples as they huddled in the upper room. Coincidentally, this week end our faith communities of St. Mary, St. Joseph and Oak Lawn Academy are celebrating with our young people as they receive the sacrament of Confirmation on Sunday afternoon.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes the effect of confirmation as a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore it brings an increase and a deepening of the grace that is bestowed on us at baptism.

In our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear about the outpouring of the Spirit in Samaria. Through the ministry of Philip, Peter, and John the people of Samaria receive baptism and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This event marks a significant increase of Christ's body here on earth and the fact that the gift of the Holy Spirit now can be given to all. This decision to live in the Spirit may bring hardship and even suffering to those

who decide to follow Christ. We who choose his path will have to be ready to suffer persecution for our faith; the comfort in this is the fact that Christ has walked this path before us and can show us the way.

In our second reading today from the first letter of Peter we are reminded that when Christ was put to death in the flesh, he was brought back to life in the Spirit. What an encouraging message for us as we strive to live our faith and tap into the energy of the Holy Spirit that is in us.

In John's gospel Jesus reassured his disciples that while he was going to leave them he would not abandon them. "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth." With these final words Jesus is addressing all believers, including all of us, "I will not leave you orphans, I will send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth to be with you always."

When we strive to live in God's love we understand how genuinely fortunate we are and that should give us profound gratitude. We need to give thanks daily for our lives, our faith, our families, and our friends.

Some time this week end I would like to ask all of you to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for all that God has blessed you with and then say another prayer for the young people being confirmed. Pray that they may recognize the special strength bestowed upon them by the Spirit, a strength that will be with them every day of their lives.