

# Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of May, 2018

by Terry A . Modica



## The Ascension of the Lord

May 10 or 13, 2018

For 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, use next page.

Read:

Acts 1:1-11

Ps 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

Eph 1:17-23 or Eph 4:1-13

Mark 16:15-20



**Reflect:**

Sometimes we find ourselves in the same posture as the disciples in Acts 1:1-11, looking up at the sky, staring at nothing, waiting for Jesus to come back and rescue this world from evil.

Our world needs the Second Coming of Christ—and now! What's the delay? Ahhh, but he's told us not to wait but to go forth and spread the Good News. He told us to take what he's given us and use it to continue the works of his ministry.

Why do we stare at the empty sky? Because we feel inadequate.

Parents know this feeling. After giving birth or adopting a child, we have the awesome task of raising this person into a faith-filled, emotionally healthy adult.

Graduates know this feeling. After completing college or a Lay Ministry training program or ordination or final vows, we stand on the threshold of working for the Lord and wonder: Will I be effective and successful? Will I like it? Or will I be sent where I'd rather not go?

Those who are grieving know this feeling. After a loved one is taken home to the Lord or a friend is lost in a failed relationship, our lives change drastically. It feels like it shouldn't have. How can we recover from the emptiness, which by its very nature forces our attention onto ourselves and our unmet needs, so that we become full of service to others?

Every change in our lives is a commissioning. Every loss is the beginning of a new calling. Every experience is training for a work of God's kingdom that the Lord wants to accomplish through us.

Why are you standing there looking at the sky? Jesus has been your teacher and your guide: Although you cannot see what he's doing now, he has not abandoned you. He is fulfilling his promise: "You will receive power from the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witness throughout the earth." Indeed, you were given that Holy Spirit in baptism, and it is this Spirit of God that empowers you to continue the ministry of Jesus using your particular gifts and

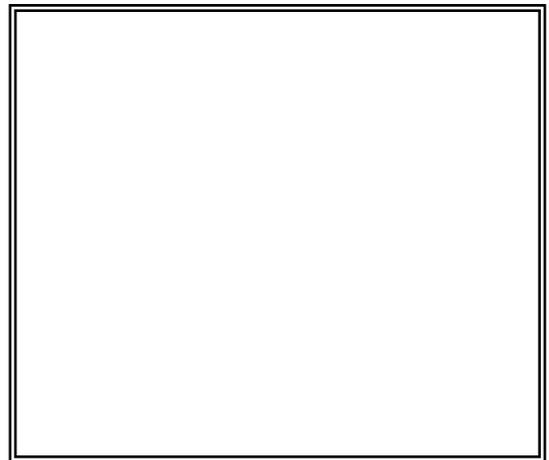
talents and experiences

**Questions for Personal Reflection:**

- † What thresholds or new beginnings are you facing?
- † How are these opportunities for the continuation of the ministry of Jesus?

**Questions for Faith Sharing:**

- † In what ways are you doing the works of Jesus?
- † Which parish ministries could use your gifts and talents?
- † How do you rely on the Holy Spirit to get it done?



## 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

May 13, 2018

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Read:

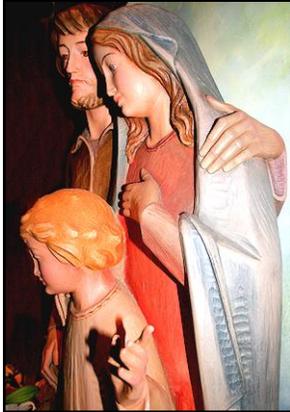
Acts 1:15-17, 20-26

Ps 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20

1 John 4:11-16

John 17:11b-19

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### Reflect:

What makes us one with our brothers and sisters of the faith, i.e., people who love and follow the same Lord, Jesus Christ?

We can have many differences and still have unity. We can have conflicts among the people who serve God in parish staffs and ministries, and still have unity. We can disagree with the non-Catholic beliefs of our Protestant kin and still have Christian unity.

Jesus prayed for this unity, as we see in the Sunday's Gospel reading for the seventh Sunday of Easter. Are we the answer to his prayer? Or are we working against him?

Being one in the Lord does not require getting rid of everything that divides us from each other. Rather, it comes from recognizing that we stand on common ground as we worship Christ, no matter how differently we worship him.

The spirit of unity is the appreciation of what we have in common. It's the recognition that we are individually members of the same body and that we need each other so that the Body of Christ on earth functions well.

Being one in the Lord Jesus means being different than the rest of the world. Our unity comes from belonging to the kingdom of God rather than to the kingdom of darkness and evil. And this unity is strengthened by purging ourselves of sin -- individually and as a body.

Jesus said to the Father, "I gave them your word, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world."

All those who love, follow, and serve Jesus, regardless of their denominational affiliations, are all members of the same family, the Holy Family. We live together on the same side of the cross, which is resurrection and eternal life.

However, when we allow ourselves to sin, thinking as the world thinks, with prejudices and judgmentalism and condemnation toward other Christians, we divide ourselves not only from our brothers and sisters but also from God's kingdom of love. We break the unity for which Jesus prayed.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Do you see yourself as united with or divided from those in your parish who worship differently than you? What about Christians of other denominations?

† Who else do you feel spiritually divided from?

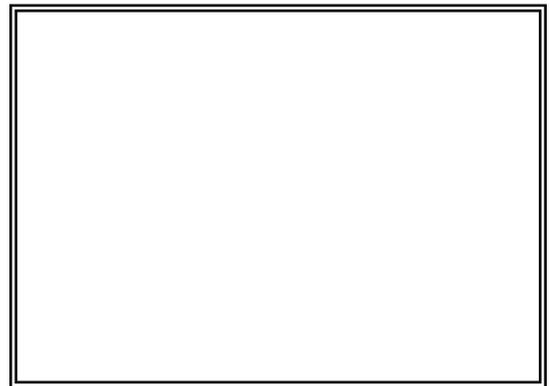
† Ask Jesus to repeat his prayer for unity but to focus it, this time, on you.

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† What are some of the ways that you've come to recognize your unity with other members of the Body of Christ, despite obvious differences?

† What does "unity" mean to you?

† How is this lived in your home or your parish?



## Pentecost Sunday

May 20, 2018

Read:

Acts 2:1-11

Ps 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23



### Reflect:

The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit generously given to us so that we can be holy and to continue the ministry that Christ began. On our own, we cannot be like Jesus, but if his Spirit is alive and active within us, we have Christ's holiness, his faith, his supernatural love and peace, confidence and endurance, and everything else that we see in Jesus.

You received the Holy Spirit during your baptism. The reality of this was confirmed and strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Ever since the first outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, God has been transforming the world by working through those who serve his Kingdom. He generously fills us with his Spirit so that we will succeed at whatever he asks us to do. But how well his holiness and power exudes from us is up to us.

### A Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Dear Jesus, stir up within me the fullness of Your Holy Spirit. Help me to live in Your holy power. Open my mind to understand Your truths, and open my heart to accept Your truths even before I gain right understanding.

O Holy Spirit, help me to seek, more than anything, the kingdom of God. Help me to recognize what I am attached to that is not of You, and give me the determination and the strength to let go. I want only You.

O Holy Spirit, help me to face my sinfulness and to feel genuine sorrow for the damage that I have caused. Comfort me as I mourn my need for forgiveness, and give me Your spirit of rejoicing over this new growth. Then, help me to share this healing mercy with all those around me.

Jesus commanded, "Go into all the world and preach the good news." Use my gifts and talents to make a difference. I have my own expectations about what I should and should not do. I now surrender to You my ideas, my limitations, my preferences, and my goals. I want to be useful to You. I want to go where You lead me. Holy Spirit, send me forth gifted and empowered to spread the holy and victorious love of Jesus Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit; renew me. Amen!

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † Does the Holy Spirit seem like a Person to you, as real as Jesus? Why or why not?
- † What effect does the "Prayer to the Holy Spirit" (above) have on you?
- † What in it is most helpful to your spiritual growth?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † How do you know when the Holy Spirit is being manifested in you? Give an example from your life.
- † How did this experience help you grow in holiness?