

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Four: Tuesday 26th May 2020

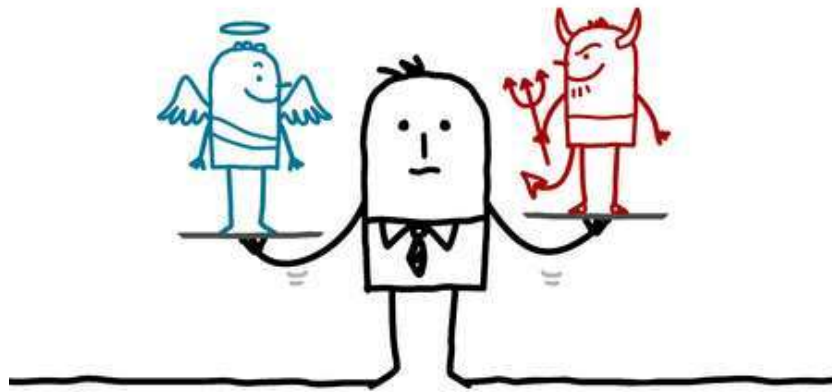


The Gift of Counsel

The Gift of Counsel, bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit, allows us to make the right decisions in life. Decisions and judgements that lead us to be more faithful to Jesus Christ our Lord.

***'I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.'*** (Psalm 15:7-8)

The Psalmist, in the above quote, gives us this wonderful image of a person who at night is still being shaped and moulded by God. It is at night that we usually sleep. Our bodies finally rest at the end of the day and we cease all movement and thought, we become inactive. However, as the Psalmist expresses, though we may be inactive at night the Holy Spirit is very much active, working within our hearts to guide us, direct us and inspire us to choose the right ways and make the good decisions. It is these right choices that will lead us to choose God and in so doing find true happiness, perfect peace and everlasting life.



We have all seen this classic image in the above cartoon! An individual is confronted with a dilemma and they are compelled to make a choice. They begin to discern and weigh up the pros and cons and confront the inner struggle. Do they listen to the Angel on the one shoulder or the devil on the other shoulder? Who do you normally listen to?

Away from the cartoon image we all find ourselves confronted with daily decisions and choices. Some are minor from *'What shall we have for tea tonight?'* Others are a little more serious, *'Is this person/issue causing problems in my life and do I need to step away and distance myself from them/it?; Does my mouth get me into trouble by my gossip, distortion of truth and facts and ill-informed criticisms and judgements?'* While other decisions are life changing, *'Shall I apply for that job? Shall I ask her to marry me? Do I step out of my comfort zone, let go of being in control and offer more of myself to God?'* When I have had to make a serious or life changing decision I've found it useful to seek out advice from others and have a trustworthy person who I can use as a soundboard. It has been through others guidance, stories of their own experience and listening to different viewpoints that have all contributed to making a better informed choice about future actions.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, when he gave a General Audience at St. Peter's Square in 2014 spoke about the Holy Spirit being our trustworthy friend and wise confidant when help is needed to make the right choices.

'When we receive and welcome him into our heart, the Holy Spirit immediately begins to make us sensitive to his voice and to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our intentions according to the heart of God. At the same time, he leads us more and more to turn our interior gaze to Jesus, as the model of our way of acting and of relating with God the Father and with the brethren.'

As we mentioned yesterday on our novena pilgrimage, we cannot just be a passive object in relation to the Holy Spirit, we are called to exercise and use the gifts he gives us. With the Gift of Counsel it is fundamental to have some knowledge about the circumstances and challenges that confront us in life. It is important that we actually know the teachings of Jesus passed on through his Apostles to the Church. Many people fall into the trap of assuming they know this or that teaching and have formed hard and solid opinions about it.

However, as I have found as a priest when you show them the actual words Jesus and unpack the teaching of the Lord there is often the reaction 'Oh, I never knew that!'. If we are to call ourselves disciples then we need to know the Word of God, his teachings and the Tradition handed on from Christ to the Apostles. We cannot base our ideas, notions and values on the world around us because as the Lord said:

***'I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them,
because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world.
I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They
do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.
Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.'*** (Jn 17:14-17)

Life, Family, Marriage, Sexuality, Social Justice and Education are all areas that, sadly, many people are making the wrong decisions in because they have not turned to Jesus to see his actions and hear his words that lead us to walk the right path. It is working with the gift of Counsel from the Holy Spirit that we are truly able to say: *'I am a real disciple who is doing my best, Come Holy Spirit help me to follow the Lord. Amen.'*

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

***Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.***

***All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,***

While endless ages run.

Amen.

In our quiet few moments on today's novena journey let us take time to ponder on the gift of Counsel. Is the right decision the easiest one? Will it cost me both personally and publicly? What are the fruits it will bear and will they blossom immediately? If I listen to my ego what effects will that have not only on those around me but also on my soul? How have the choices of 'I' and 'Me' disfigured Christ's face to those around me and the wider world? How often do I cry from the heart 'Come, O Holy Spirit' before I begin a task or make a judgement?

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue on day five of our Novena pilgrimage tomorrow.

Fr. O'Brien