

This is Pentecost Sunday – the celebration of Jesus’ sending the Holy Spirit to the Apostles in the Upper Room. Powered by the Spirit they will go out and announce the Good News about the life with God that Jesus brings. Last week. Today I want to preach about our own, related, spiritual journeys. Sherry Weddell, in her book, Forming Intentional Disciples, mentions the three spiritual journeys that a Catholic should be making. The first is the Church journey, wherein one formally explores and then enters the Catholic Church through the sacraments of initiation. The second is the journey of active practice, the growth in participation in the life and community of the Church -- receiving the sacraments, going to mass, being a member of parish groups, etc. The third is the personal, interior prayer journey to an ever deeper relationship with Jesus.

While ideally every Catholic would be progressing on all three journeys, the truth is that most of us aren’t. True, most of us have finished the first journey. Unless you’ve come today thinking about

converting to Catholicism, most of us here were probably baptized as infants, received first communion as kids, and hopefully were confirmed sometime later. We're officially Catholics, right?

The second journey is a work in progress for many of us. Our practice of the faith has its ups and downs, but we have a pretty good idea of what we should be doing here: go to mass more often, maybe even confession once in a while, get involved. Being what is known as "a practicing Catholic."

But the third journey is where we're weakest. That lived, interior prayer relationship with Jesus? That's hard – we secretly may not even know how, or if it's possible -- or real. AND (here's my main point) most Catholics think being a good Catholic consists in just being on journeys one and two. The third journey is a nice optional thing for the spiritually gifted, which we don't see ourselves as being.

But we can think of ourselves as good Catholics according to canon law, we can be active in practicing the faith by our mass

attendance and volunteer hours at our parish – and still not be Jesus’ Disciples . . . because we don’t know Him, or believe that He is involved in our daily lives. We just haven’t had that experience. And that’s the greatest sadness, and why it’s a true failure of this parish if we don’t proclaim the necessity and possibility of growth in the third journey. Ultimately membership and activity in the Church lack fruitfulness without it. Genuine Catholic identity always flows from discipleship, which is, in turn, based on growing and living fully all three journeys – membership, practice, and relationship.

For several years now at Holy Family we’ve been talking about Discipleship. Many of the initiatives we’ve offered have been aimed at trying to increase our knowledge of Jesus and facilitate an encounter with Him that would lead to a deeper relationship. That is why we have run the Christ-Life and Alpha programs, offered service projects and opportunities, speakers, conferences, pushed adoration, etc.

This Pentecost I want to do three things. First, I want to remind you of the Connect Groups we started last autumn. We don't grow as Catholics in isolation. Connect Groups are small communities of parishioners who gather regularly in their homes for a meal and some presentation on, and discussion of, the faith. We have five groups going right now. I asked their members what they got out of it. One woman said, "As a new Catholic, I was floundering on how to be more involved at Holy Family. When I joined a Connect Group it opened a new world to me. I had the opportunity to really make friends with my fellow parishioners and get to know them on a spiritual level. They offer me support, guidance and great Christian conversations." Another member of a group added, "Throughout my life as a Catholic I've worshipped and volunteered beside people who rarely speak of God in a personal, relational sense. My Connect group has shown me that, yes, others share many of my questions and experiences regarding the Trinity's ongoing effects on my life." Please think about joining one of these groups. It might really change your faith practice and prayer. There will

be members of the Connect Groups over in the St. Jerome Room after mass. Go over and get connected – or just ask questions.

I also want to remind you about FORMED, the on-line Catholic resource we subscribe to. There's so much at this web-site that it's crazy. How many of us waste hours and hours playing games on-line – or waste time in unproductive wandering on the internet? Just once spend a half hour looking at FORMED and see what's there. I'm sure you'll find something to grab you – a movie or documentary, a class on scripture or how to have a healthy marriage. Give it a chance. Our parish access code is bcc29f. There will be people in the foyer after mass with laptops to help you look at the site and get you set up.

Last, but most important, I'm adding something to how we worship here at Holy Family. Since prayer is the real driver of Christian Discipleship, from now on at every mass we will be praying for each of us to remember our mission and to take a step on our three journeys. Starting today, Pentecost, we will pray together to the Holy Spirit at

each mass during the Prayers of the Faithful. There are these little laminated green cards in the pews. Take one out. [Read]. These stay in the church, but you can get your own card to take with you over in the foyer after mass.

But we'll not only pray this petition to the Spirit at Mass. At the beginning of every parish meeting I also want this prayer prayed. You can pray in other ways, as well, but always include this prayer. At Holy Family our mission is to help God help one another on our spiritual journeys to Jesus within His Church. The Holy Spirit will empower us to do that, and even more, if we just ask.