

Noticing Pentecost

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We are now spying the “see motorcycles” messages on highway signs. Last fall we saw “watch for deer” notices. This Sunday is the “watch for the Holy Spirit” celebration of the Church’s birthday. Bunching these ideas together seems corny. But how often do you or I begin our day intending to notice the Spirit? How often do we reflect on its presence at the end of our day? Somebody should have formed this year-round awareness in us. If not, we can teach ourselves.

We say “I believe in the Holy Spirit” in both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), Second Edition (n. 686) tells us that in “the Son’s redeeming Incarnation, the Spirit is revealed and given, recognized and welcomed as a person.”

Just how are we to recognize the Spirit’s presence and effects? This ability is an important focus of confirmation preparations. Also, it is central to the celebration of baptism.

Again, I refer you to the CCC, especially the section on virtues that begins at n. 1803. We have a recognition primer at numbers 1830 through 1941. In particular, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed. And the traditional fruits of the Spirit follow: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity. These are manifestations of the Spirit: We should look for them around us and aspire to live them.

Please read the CCC footnotes: The above lists are taken from Scripture passages! I only mention this because there are still people, even misinformed Catholics, who say that the Catholic Church does not teach from the Bible. There are 30 pages of Scripture citations in the Index paired with numbers of the paragraphs based on them.

To underline the importance of the names for virtues, fruits and gifts, let me repeat an observation from philosophers: The aboriginal Florida Indians did not see Christopher Columbus’ “Niña” arriving because they did not have a word for “ship.”

What a joy for us, then, to have a Bible-based vocabulary that helps us to witness the Spirit’s assistance. Don’t have a Catechism at home? The whole CCC is online under beliefs and teachings at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Web site:

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefsand-teachings/index.cfm>

And before I forget to say it, Happy Birthday!