



# Bringing Home the Word



Pentecost

May 15, 2016

## Daily "Perks"

By Janel Esker

I'm in the minority when it comes to coffee. It's a foul-tasting, dark-colored water to me, but to most Americans it's the best-tasting stuff on earth. Many depend on their morning cup of joe to start their day: "I'm just not myself until I have my coffee." They can't imagine going a day without it.

The same could—and should—be said of the Holy Spirit. Today on Pentecost we remember and celebrate the first gift of the Spirit to the disciples, but it's also a day to thank God for that incredible, ongoing gift in our daily lives.

## Sunday Readings

### Acts 2:1–11

"There came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house."

### 1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13

"We were all given to drink of one Spirit."

### John 20:19–23

"[Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Saint Paul writes, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." True, we can't proclaim Jesus as Lord without the Spirit, but we also can't do much of anything without its grace. We can't love, can't forgive, can't survive hardship, can't heal without the ongoing movement of the Spirit. So we can say about the Spirit what we say about our morning java: "I'm just not myself without it."

Saint Paul writes that we are all given to drink of the same Spirit. It's an intriguing image—how do you "drink" the Spirit?—but a most appropriate one as we understand how energizing, motivating, and life-giving the Holy Spirit is.

Today, let's ask the Spirit to rush into those places in our lives that need to be revived, those areas of our hearts that are weary and worn.

And when sipping your coffee, imagine drinking in the Spirit of God—and thank him for this most amazing gift. †

## A Word From Pope Francis

The Church of the Pentecost is a Church that won't submit to being powerless, too "distilled"....She is a Church that doesn't hesitate to go out, meet the people, proclaim the message that's been entrusted to her, even if that message disturbs or unsettles the conscience, even if that message perhaps brings problems and sometimes leads to martyrdom. She is born one and universal, with a distinct identity, but open, a Church that embraces the world but doesn't seize it...:

two arms that open to receive, but that don't close to detain. We Christians are free, and the Church wants us free!



—*Regina Caeli*, June 8, 2014 (Pentecost)

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I let the Holy Spirit guide me during the day?
- What spiritual gifts can I thank God for this week?

# Religion: More Relevant Than Ever or Not at All?

By John L. Gresham, PhD

Three aspects of modern culture have rendered religion irrelevant to many. First, many claim religion is a mythological view that has been disproved and displaced by scientific advancements. These philosophical skeptics conclude that in the realm of value and meaning, each person should construct his or her own sense of truth and morality. From that stems the pursuit of a personal spirituality severed from organized religion. A closer look and more careful consideration of these dimensions will reveal that religion, and the Catholic faith in particular, still has immense relevance in the modern world.

## Science

In the twentieth century, science portrayed the world as mere matter and energy interacting according to deterministic laws of cause and effect. However, with the quantum revolution in physics and the genetic revolution in biology, science moved from that model. It has discovered patterns of mathematical symmetry and order in nature that are more congruent with religion's description of a universe with a beginning and uniquely fine-tuned characteristics. Scientists may not reject modern accounts of the origin of the universe or the evolution of life, but may still claim that science points toward God as its ultimate source.

Despite its ability to answer questions of "What?" and "How?" science cannot answer ultimate questions of "Why?": Why is there a universe? What is its meaning and purpose? For the answers, we must turn to religion. At the center of the Church's moral teachings and its application to ethical issues raised by scientific advances is a commitment to the dignity and value of each human life. When potential misuses of science threaten human life and dignity, this affirmation assures the continuing relevance of the Catholic religion.

## Skepticism

With so many religions and philosophies in practice, it is easy to adopt a philosophy of relativism. Religion is irrelevant, skeptics assert, because it can't satisfy everyone. We must not impose our values on others, they insist, but let everyone formulate his or her own philosophy.

Despite its initial appeal, skepticism cannot satisfy. No matter how much we espouse relativism, a universal morality will constantly reassert itself. When we judge behaviors, insist on justice or complain about injustices, or condemn evils, we reveal these standards. When we violate them ourselves, we may argue and justify our actions. We may try to blame them on our upbringing or dismiss them as "Catholic guilt." Yet if we pay attention, we realize that our conscience appeals to an external standard of right and wrong, to which all are accountable.

Although religion has been used for evil, it provides an eternal witness to the commandments, values, and virtues of the moral life. With its teachings on the natural moral law, the Catholic faith appeals not just to believers but to all people of goodwill, as rational and free

persons, to follow the precepts we share by our common human nature.

## Spirituality

Despite having given up on organized religion, many admit a spiritual hunger within themselves. They seek to construct their own spirituality, but their quest confirms what religion teaches. The *Catechism* proclaims, "The desire for God is written in the human heart" (CCC 27). And it says that only in God will we find complete truth and happiness. The seeker ought not to ignore the accumulated wisdom of many throughout history who have pursued the same quest. Otherwise, he or she may be condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Nor should the seeker pursue the quest alone, neglecting the supportive companionship that religion provides. Catholics believe Christ is present in a unique and special way in the Church—in its people, places, and practices. The One we seek has been seeking us always. Those who take time with Christ may discover just how relevant he is. †



# PRAYER

Lord, you send forth your Spirit.  
Teach me to walk your way  
of love and compassion  
in hope and gratitude.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

May 16–21

Mon. Weekday (7th week in Ordinary Time):  
James 3:13–18 / Mark 9:14–29

Tue. Weekday:  
James 4:1–10 / Mark 9:30–37

Wed. Weekday:  
James 4:13–17 / Mark 9:38–40

Thu. Weekday:  
James 5:1–6 / Mark 9:41–50

Fri. Weekday:  
James 5:9–12 / Mark 10:1–12

Sat. Weekday:  
James 5:13–20 / Mark 10:13–16