

Solemnity of Pentecost 2016
The Closing of the Diocesan Synod
St. Rose of Lima Church

“Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth!” The Church prays this in every age and in every season, for we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and we rely on the Spirit’s inspiration and guidance. Ever since we started the work of the Diocesan Synod, we have prayed that God would send us the Holy Spirit. I have prayed that the Holy Spirit would renew the face of our diocese—the Church here in northern Nevada.

The story that we recall for this Solemnity of Pentecost is told in the Acts of the Apostles, our first reading. We are familiar with how the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with a “noise like a strong driving wind”, appearing as tongues of fire, empowering them to speak in different tongues, so that the large crowd that had gathered from various lands heard the disciples in their native language. The people were astounded, some filled with wonder. However, the reading we heard today stops short and does not mention the skeptics in the crowd. They “said, scoffing, ‘They have had too much new wine’”, they’re drunk. They thought the disciples were inebriated. High on wine.

Yes, they were high on something for sure: the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit renews us there is often palpable enthusiasm, a jump start of new energy, creative vision, fresh hope and passion revitalized. Isn’t this what we ask when we pray for the Spirit to renew us? Isn’t this what we hoped the Synod would bring? There certainly was passion among you delegates when we gathered in December. You came with energy and, even though you worked long hours for three days, you stuck it out to the end so that today we have the initiatives that have been presented and which I have promulgated for implementation.

We did a lot work these past three years, from the announcement of the Synod until this moment. Today we celebrate what we have accomplished: the initiatives, yes, but also the entire process of bringing us together, listening, discerning, praying, being Church together. We celebrate today but tomorrow there will be much more work to be done.

There are 79 initiatives to implement on the parish, deanery and diocesan levels. We’re going to need to involve as many people as possible to do this. There were probably 400 people involved in the Synod process in one way or another—delegates,

alternates, preparatory commission, and volunteers. We'll need to at least quadruple that number if we're going to put into place all the initiatives. And we're going to need to continue to pray, "Lord, send us your Spirit and renew us"—Holy Spirit, keep our energy sustained, stoke our enthusiasm, and strengthen our resolve to make things happen.

The thing is, if we do implement the Synod's initiatives, then the face of our diocese and our parishes will be renewed. Because the initiatives cover the full range of our lives as Catholics and as Church—our mission, evangelization, parish life, liturgy, education, adult formation, marriage, family life, youth, the sacraments, leadership, lay ministry, vocations, clergy, pastoral care, outreach, cultural diversity, the social teaching of the Church, the use of technology and media, catechesis, spirituality and prayer. If we attend to all of these, the face of our Church will be renewed.

Our second reading for this Mass was from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he describes the Church as a body, with members endowed by the Spirit with various gifts, with the many parts fitting together and joined in one body, which is Christ Jesus. I hope the Synod gave us a concrete sense that we are one body and that we will encourage, support and strengthen one another, for we are the Church here in northern Nevada, which is in communion with the Church universal and with our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

And as one body we share a mission. In today's Gospel, Jesus appeared after the resurrection and said to the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." If together, as a body, we hear and believe this and put this belief into practice through the Synod's initiatives, then we will see how the Holy Spirit renews the face of our Church.

St. Paul says, "If we live in the Spirit, [then] let us follow the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). This we have sought to do. In our Synod Prayer, we asked that "Through the work of our Synod may we follow where the Holy Spirit leads." We will do our utmost to make sure the work of the Synod bears fruit. But we also know that we cannot accomplish anything of true significance without the help of the Holy Spirit. We know that in the end, if the Synod's work bears fruit, it will be more than in programs and projects. If we follow where the Spirit leads us, our life will be in Christ Jesus and among us we will find and share love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23), which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

And so we pray, "Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of your Church."