

- On Friday morning I had the joy of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for our school children, which I do every Friday. But this week's Mass was a bit more special because we had our May crowning and procession.
- In this beautiful action that Catholic children around the world perform every year during this month especially dedicated to our Lady, we show our love and devotion to the Mother of God and ask for her protection and prayers.
- As Catholics we are constantly encouraged through our prayers and devotions to place ourselves under her maternal care and guidance, for Mary is the Highest Honor of Our Race, and through her cooperation with God's will our salvation was made possible.
- As the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary holds a unique and irreplaceable role in what we call the "economy of salvation", and because of this the Church has always lavished her with great praise and honor, and rightly so.
- Today, May 31, is traditionally the day of the year that we celebrate the Marian feast of the Visitation, in which the newly pregnant Mary went to visit Elizabeth, who had conceived John the Baptist in her old age.
- But in this year's liturgical calendar, the great feast of Pentecost is celebrated today! This is the day that we recall how the Holy Spirit descended upon our Lady and the apostles 9 days after Jesus ascended into Heaven, giving birth to our one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.
- Pentecost is the day that we pay special honor to the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity for all that He does to sanctify, console, guide, and strengthen us as we live out our earthly lives.
- Pentecost is the day in which we reflect upon the role of the Holy Spirit in salvation history, and how He carried out the will of the Father so that we might be saved.
- But as we do this, it is difficult not to think about Mary, who, outside of Jesus, has been the human person most deeply connected with the Holy Spirit.
- Indeed, throughout the entire course of her earthly life, Mary served as a vessel of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish the will of the Father.
- In fact, so close is the connection between the Holy Spirit and our Lady that in his encyclical, *Divinum Illud Munus*, Pope Leo XIII referred to Mary as the "Spouse of the Holy Spirit." There are many reasons for this title.
- As Catholics we know and believe that Mary was conceived immaculately. At the first moment of her conception in the womb of her mother, St. Ann, Mary was preserved free from all stain of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- In other words, even from the very first moment of life, the Holy Spirit was preparing Mary for the unique and essential role she was to play in salvation history. Thus, she received particular graces through the Holy Spirit that no other human person has ever received.
- At the Annunciation St. Gabriel made mention of these graces when he addressed Mary as "full of grace" and "blessed among women."
- Certainly it is most fitting that the woman chosen to become the very mother of our Lord should be given graces that correspond with the sublime dignity of her vocation and her role in salvation history (cf. CCC 722).
- And in that quiet but magnificent moment in which St. Gabriel and Mary met face to face, the Holy Spirit acted in such wondrous fashion that Mary received the gift of the unborn

Christ child in her womb and eventually gave birth to Him without the loss of her virginity (*CCC 723*).

- Thus it was that a humble virgin from the obscure town of Nazareth became the Mother of God. Mary was overshadowed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus was born of her and became man.
- In this way the Holy Spirit was able to fulfill the plans of the Father through Mary. By the power of the Holy Spirit acting through her, Jesus took on human flesh so that He could redeem us by dying for our sins.
- Not only did Mary bring Christ into the world in human form, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit she inaugurated our Lord's public ministry at Cana when she encouraged her Son to perform His first public miracle.
- Moreover, the Blessed Virgin Mary was with our Lord as He suffered His Passion and death on the cross, all the while enduring her own parallel passion, as prophesied by the aged Simeon when she and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple.
- Strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary was able to endure the agony of having her own heart pierced by sorrow, offering her suffering in union with her Son's suffering on the cross for the salvation of all mankind.
- And when the course of her earthly life was over, Mary was assumed body and soul into Heaven through the gracious action of the Holy Spirit, giving us hope for our own resurrection.
- Now in Heaven, where she reigns as Queen, the Holy Spirit acts through our Lady's intercession to bring people into communion with Christ (*CCC 725*) and to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation (*CCC 969*).
- Like a good mother, she pleads constantly with her Son for our benefit, procuring for us every grace we need to grow in holiness and virtue.
- Thus, Mary shows us what is possible for the Holy Spirit to accomplish in a person if we are docile to Him. Mary's life reveals the Spirit's power in a particularly beautiful and inspiring way, giving us hope and spurring us on to that obedience that leads to holiness.
- "By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Thus she is a "preeminent and . . . wholly unique member of the Church" (*CCC 967*).
- So as we call to mind today the birth of the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit, it is certainly just and necessary to give thanks to our Lady for cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that God's salvific will could be accomplished.
- Mary is indeed the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and she is the Mother of the Church. She is our Advocate, our Helper, our Benefactress, and our Mediatrix (*CCC 969*).
- Therefore, let us pray today that through the intercession of our Lady, each of us may become more docile to the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.
- With her maternal assistance, let us deepen our relationship with the Holy Spirit, Who will sanctify us and prepare us for Heaven.
- Come, Holy Spirit, come by the means of the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Your well-beloved spouse. Amen.