



**Abbot Thomas Frerking**  
**The Solemnity of Pentecost – Year C**  
**Saint Louis Abbey, May 23, 2010**

**Homily**

Dear friends, the Holy Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church reveal, what human reason of itself could never have come to know, that there are two processions within God himself, God who is nevertheless utterly and perfectly simple. From God's knowledge there proceeds an inner Word, a Word who contains all that God is, who is one in being with God, who is not different from God, and yet who is distinct from that from which he proceeds. From God's knowledge and Word there proceeds an inner Spirit, a Spirit of love who is an infinitely blissful resting in the goodness and beauty which is God, who is one in being with God, who is not different from God, and yet who is distinct from that from which he proceeds. That from which the Word proceeds is the Father, the first Person of the Most Holy Trinity; the Word who proceeds is the Son, the Second Person; the Spirit who proceeds is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person.

This Third Person, on the Pentecost Day following our Lord's Resurrection, was given to Our Blessed Mother, the apostles and the disciples all praying together in the upper room, and thus the Church was constituted and founded. This same Holy Spirit is given to all those who believe, given to them through Baptism and through the Laying on of Hands, and thus the Church is extended and continued until the end of time. This same Holy Spirit is given to each of us more fully whenever grace is increased in us, as it will be in particular if we participate worthily in this Mass today.

What indirect understanding can we have of this truth, in itself incomprehensible to us in this life, that the Holy Spirit has been given to us and dwells within us? First, what does it mean to say that he is in us in a way in which he was not before, he who as God is in all things, always? It means that he is in us from the moment we enter into a state of grace in a special way not shared with non-rational creatures or with human beings not in a state of grace, a way consisting in our capacity to sense or feel him and his operation in us in a quasi-experiential way through the stirrings and movements of the love for God which he directly inspires in us.

Then, what are the implications of this special presence of him within us? First, it must be the case that the Father and the Son are also dwelling in us; for where the Holy Spirit is, the other two Persons must necessarily be, since all three dwell within one another. And indeed, we can in a quasi-experiential way sense or feel them and their operations in us through the obscure faith-knowledge of God



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which the Father directly inspires in us, and through the obscure concept of God, or rather of what God is not, which proceeds in us from that faith-knowledge under the direct inspiration of the Son. So it is that Our Lord says in the Gospel for this feast, as we have just heard: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."

There is a second implication of the Holy Spirit's special presence within us. The Holy Scriptures repeatedly call the Holy Spirit 'the Gift'; they use the word 'gift' of him without qualification, as if he were *the Gift*, that is, the first gift of God to us, who carries with him all other gifts given to us by God. In what way is this so? Saint Thomas explains that the first gift a person gives to another is the gift of his love for that other; it is because of his love for the other that he gives all the other gifts that he gives. Since, then, the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, he is the first gift, *the Gift*, given to us by God. But this explanation, as we reflect upon it, does not seem to satisfy. For, when we say that one human being loves another, we do not mean that the love of the one who loves *dwells in* the one who is loved. And again, the love in question is the love of the first person *for* the second person. But the Holy Spirit is God's love for God. How, then, can God's placing his love for God in our hearts be his giving us his love for us? God's love for God could also be God's love for us only if, by the Lord's grace and mercy, we are in some way like God, or indeed only if, by the Lord's grace and mercy, we are in some way one with God. But this is precisely what is revealed to us to be true: Our Lord says: "I in you and you in me." Saint Peter says: "Through his promises you may become sharers in the divine nature." Saint John says: "To all who received him he gave power to become children of God." St. Paul says: "Whoever clings to the Lord is one spirit with him." We have already in this life, then, by the Lord's infinite love and mercy, been made in some way one with God, so that the Holy Spirit, God's love for God, is God's love for us, and so that God's love for us dwells in us, for God's love for God dwells in God.

Dear friends, the reality of which these truths speak is the whole reality of Easter already present in our souls, but present in a veiled way with its glory hidden until our future resurrection, when it will be revealed in our souls as it is in itself, and its glory will shine forth and glorify both our souls and our bodies. We can see why then the mystery of Pentecost is the final extension of the mystery of Easter into our lives in this world, and why then the Solemnity of Pentecost is the completion of the Easter Season. These truths, that by the Lord's infinite love and mercy the Most Holy Trinity dwells within us, and that we are in some way one with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – these truths are of limitless magnitude and salvific power, so that there could be no sense in ultimately devoting one's life to anything other than contemplating these truths and sharing them with others as best one could. And thus ultimately devoting one's life is precisely what each of us Christians is called to do, each according to our own vocation in this world. Moreover, we are amply equipped to carry out this joyful task by the gifts of the



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Holy Spirit within us, those sharings in this life in the power of his love which we call wisdom and understanding, knowledge and counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord: wisdom, the love-knowledge of God; understanding, the love-understanding of the God's revelation; knowledge, the love-knowledge of creation in the light of God; counsel, the love-knowledge of how to live and act in the light of God; fortitude, the strength of love; piety, the reverence of love; fear of God, the filial fear of love. Let us go forth then into the world, and into the green time, the Ordinary Time, of our lives as Christians, go forth to praise the Lord and to share his mystery, in the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the love of God, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.