

“Love your neighbor as yourself”

Jesus



“I want to accustom all the inhabitants ...to look on me as their brother”

Bl. Charles de Foucauld

Dear Friends in Jesus Christ,

Happy Pentecost! Today commemorates the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, a sending that changed their hearts from fearful to fearless.

Quite a bit has happened since I last sent out a newsletter. I was blessed to discern with the Diocese of Biloxi whether I might be called to the diocesan priesthood. While I am not called to begin studies for the diocese, the process of discernment was of immense value for my own vocational journey, and my development as a person. I will speak a bit more about this in the meditation that follows.

In accordance with the guidance of my spiritual director, I will begin taking classes at the [Avila Institute](#) this fall. The Avila Institute is a very solid institution that offers advanced courses in spiritual theology. Spiritual theology is, very briefly, the study of sanctity—what is holiness, and how do we become holy? The goal of these courses is to be able to offer spiritual direction and conferences to a greater degree.

Coupled with this formation, my other goal is to take the 2-year [Spiritual Mentorship Program](#) offered by the Apostles of the Interior Life. These sisters and priests provide spiritual direction as a major part of their apostolate, and the mentorship program helps form others to do the same. I was blessed to preach the sisters' annual retreat last year, so I can't wait to be able to spend more time with them.

I would invite you to read through the following meditation, as it has a personal message in it from me to you.

God's peace be yours,

Matthew

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Prayers are needed and appreciated!
(no postal fee required)



Meditation

June 2015

"And my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' My friends, consider the greatness of this solemn feast that commemorates God's coming as a guest into our hearts! If some rich and influential friend were to come to your home, you would promptly put it all in order for fear something there might offend your friend's eyes when he came in. Let all of us then who are preparing our inner homes for God cleanse them of anything our wrongdoing has brought into them."

St. Gregory the Great, "On Pentecost"



My own meditations in recent weeks have been on the theme of putting my own house in order. This is such a difficult task, as it involves the pain and effort of a deep cleaning. Just when it appears that all is finished, I look under a piece of furniture and see a mess of dust and trash. God provides us with the graces that are needed (and can, on occasion, step in with a broom and take care of something particularly hidden or troublesome), but we are expected to work along with him.

Part of the reason I have put off writing this meditation has been the interior struggle of deciding whether I was ready to put my relationships with others "in order". A verse that has rattled around my thoughts is, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." ([Matthew 5:23,24](#)).

I wrote earlier of my discernment with the diocese of Biloxi. As part of the discernment, I met several times with a good friend of mine who is also a counselor. My desire was to understand myself better, and to see my weaknesses and strengths. I came to see that I really struggle to be charitable to others and to myself. While I am very deeply appreciative of who I am now, I was definitely my own worst enemy in the past, especially when I was far from God. Out of that frustration came my mistreatment of others, including many of you.

And so, this Pentecost, I wish to offer my deepest apology to you for any wrong that you have suffered from me, and to ask for your forgiveness. I also want to extend my full forgiveness to you, should there be any wrong you might have committed against me. If there is anything that you would like to speak with me about, please get in touch with me privately. I would love to have said this personally to each and every one of you, but it would be impossible. I am thankful that technology now affords at least this small contact with so many of the people that I have known.

We will not always treat each other with the love that we should, but thank God we have the power to forgive each other and find peace through forgiving. A most Blessed Pentecost to you!

