

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The first reading this weekend is from the Acts of the Apostles, and takes place right after the Ascension of the Lord (which we celebrated on Thursday). Jesus told the disciples to stay in the city (Jerusalem) and pray for the power from on high to come upon them (the Holy Spirit) (see Luke 24:49). The reading from Acts makes note of the eleven Apostles (remember that Judas Iscariot had died by this point), as well as some women, specifically naming Mary.

Mary, like all of us, is daughter of the Father. By her “*fiat*” – her “yes”, the “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38) – she becomes the Mother of God. In her Immaculate Conception – when she is conceived without sin in her mother’s (St. Anne) womb – she becomes the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Mary’s whole life is lived in complete conformity with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The Angel Gabriel makes reference to this when he says, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you**” (Luke 1:35). Mary also brings her spouse, the Holy Spirit, with her throughout her life, and by her presence bestows the Spirit on others. His is clear in the Visitation to Elizabeth

When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit ... “at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.” (Luke 1:41, 44)

Mary’s greeting brought the Holy Spirit to Elizabeth and John the Baptist!

We also see that Mary takes the name of her spouse – the *Immaculate Conception*. St. Maximilian Kolbe, a great Marian theologian of the last century, spent most of his life pondering and praying over why Mary named herself as “the Immaculate Conception” to St. Bernadette in Lourdes (1858). He came to realize that the Uncreated Immaculate Conception was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, from all eternity, was the uncreated conception of love between God the Father and God the Son. Mary, in becoming the Bride of the Holy Spirit, takes on His Name, and is the created Immaculate Conception. (If this is confusing, don’t worry about it! This is high theology, and took a great mind his whole life to figure out. If we can walk away with, “Mary is the Bride of the Holy Spirit” that’s all we need.)

What’s the point of all of this? When Mary was in the Upper Room with the Apostles in the days between the Ascension and Pentecost, I’ll bet that she was teaching them about the early life of Jesus, and preparing them to receive the Holy Spirit in a powerful way in their lives.

For us, this means that we can look to Mary to help us get close to the Holy Spirit. Some Christians want the Holy Spirit, but not Mary. Some want Mary, but not the Holy Spirit. Since they were “wed” (as it were), they are never apart – they never got divorced! When we call upon Mary, we call upon the Holy Spirit. When we call upon the Holy Spirit, we call upon Mary – not because Mary is Divine (she is NOT... she is a creature, made by God, just like you and me), but because God has willed it in His infinite wisdom and generosity. If you want to get close to the source of love in the world, the One who is Love Himself – the Holy Spirit – we need only get close to Mary, and she will bring us to the Holy Spirit! When we pray the “Hail Mary,” we greet Mary. Mary will also greet us back. As when she greeted Elizabeth, Mary’s greeting brings us the Holy Spirit. When we devoutly pray to Mary, we open ourselves to her motherly care, and allow her gently to open us to the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this month of May – a month dedicated to Mary – in this year of the 100th Anniversary of the Apparitions at Fatima, may we truly grow closer to the Holy Spirit and His Spouse, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and may we allow them to bring us into the Hearts of God the Father and Jesus, His Divine Son.