

PENTECOST SUNDAY

June 9, 2019

Acts 2:1–11 • Romans 8:8–17 • John 20:19–23

I.

St. Augustine, FL.

Founded in 1565,
the city is the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States.

My parents live in Orlando,
so several years ago my mom and I visited St. Augustine.

It was there that I learned about how Florida got its name.

As was their custom,
Spanish explorers gave areas Catholic names,
based on saints' days and the liturgical seasons.

Fifty years before the founding of St. Augustine,
the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León (1474–1521)
—he's forever associated with the mythical fountain of youth—
discovered the peninsula on April 2, 1513.

It was Easter, so he called the land *La Pascua Florida*:
“The Flowering Easter.”

II.

Easter is a time for flowering,
after the Church walked through the “desert” of Lent:

Flowers bloom in nature,
and the Church blooms in its commemoration of Christ's Resurrection.

The Church is itself reborn,
as we've seen here in the parish in recent months.

Several infants have been baptized.

The children of the parish made their First Holy Communion several weeks ago.

And on Sunday afternoon at the cathedral, eleven teenagers in the parish will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Barry Knestout.

(Two more young people will be confirmed the following Sunday here in the parish.)

The Holy Spirit, whose arrival we commemorate at Pentecost, is responsible for this “flowering” of sacramental life.

It’s one way that the Spirit of God causes the Church to develop and grow.

And he’s always at work, bringing God’s plan to completion.

The Spirit of God helps us to keep moving forward, always responding to the grace of God.

We receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism.

And we receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

Confirmation is the sacrament of the Church’s mission; that is, of Christian testimony: bearing witness to Jesus Christ in the world.

Confirmation is a renewal of Pentecost, today’s great feast.

Pentecost is not just the 50th day after Easter; the gift of the Holy Spirit was the culmination of the whole Paschal Mystery.

Confirmation bestows a special power of the Holy Spirit to empower a person live out the Christian faith.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,

“By the Sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (no. 1285).

The sacrament is called “Confirmation” because it “confirms” or strengthens the grace of Baptism.

This does not mean that Baptism is not effective by itself.

Rather, Confirmation orients and supplements Baptism in regard to mission.

Please note that Confirmation has nothing to do with being an adult in the Church.

Promise me that you will never—ever!—say that in Confirmation, a person makes a one-time, definitive commitment to the Catholic Church, because the confirmand’s parents did so at Baptism.

No! The Christian faith is lived out each day by a person’s witness.

The Holy Spirit constantly works in us to discern and accomplish God’s will.

That is true spiritual progress; it is not perfection.

So, it’s OK to go to the next stage:
in a job, in a friendship, or in the spiritual life.

Naturally there is doubt, hesitation, or even fear.

But the Spirit of God leads and accompanies us.

I’m thinking about all of this as I have to face a transition in my own life.

Monday will be the 14th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood.

And now I’m being sent to a new parish.

IV.

There is a saying a like very much.

It is the motto of St. Junípero Serra (1713–1784), the Franciscan friar who founded many of the missions along the coast of CA during the 1700s, when the territory belonged to Spain.

(Incidentally, we may not realize that Spain colonized parts of North America before England.)

Pope Francis canonized St. Junípero Serra in 2015 at the National Shrine in Washington; I was there.

It was the first canonization to ever take place in the United States.

Siempre adelante: “Always move forward”; “keep moving forward.”

That was St. Junípero’s saying—appropriate for a man who walked great distances, and applicable to all Christians.

The Holy Spirit is at work in us, at work in the Church.

He is God himself, who moves us to do the Father’s will, after the likeness of the Son, in all situations.

That is how we give Christian witness:
by moving forward in Christ, for all the world to see.