

The following text was prepared for oral delivery.

Have you ever been faced with a problem that seems insurmountable?
Have you ever had to confront a situation that you felt you didn't have the energy for?
Have you ever held your ground on an unpopular position that you knew to be right?
Have you ever defended some one who was unpopular without backing down?
Have you ever endured a trial - the rejection of a loved one, an illness, loneliness, some sort of persecution - and not given up?

Have you ever endured any of these things and were surprised by how well you dealt with them?
Or have you been faced with these situations and wished you had had some help?
Have these things presented themselves to you and you called on God for his help?

If you've ever been faced with these situations and asked for help from the Lord, or were surprised by how well you handled the situation
Or if you ever wished you had done so
You were in need of the *strength, courage, and perseverance* that are all aspects of one particular gift of the Holy Spirit
When ever you call upon the Lord in these situations, you are calling upon the Holy Spirit, you are asking for the gift of **fortitude**.

Before the Lord ascended into heaven, he told his disciples that it was better for him to go than for him to stay.
It was better for him to go because by going he could send the Holy Spirit upon them, the Advocate, the Helper, to remain with them, with us, always.

And so, from the day of the Lord's Ascension, the disciples gathered in the upper room with Mary and spent their time praying and preparing themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
It was nine days from the day of the Lord's Ascension (traditionally celebrated 40 days after his Resurrection) until the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost - this we might call the first novena - a nine day period.

And thus, we, too, are gathered in what we might call the upper room - the place where the Lord makes his Body and Blood present to us - in order to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter. In particular we ask him for his gift of fortitude as we recall how scared his disciples were after the Resurrection.
They were afraid of suffering the same treatment and death that the Lord did, they were afraid even to speak his name in public, yet the Lord warned them that *if the world hates you, remember that it hated me first*. But Jesus didn't say this to scare them, but to

prepare them and strengthen them to share his love with the world.

So what changed? What is different that we hear the stories written in the Acts of the Apostles?

The apostles weren't any less at risk of being persecuted, but now with the gift of the Holy Spirit, they had the courage to live up to the Lord's command.

And this same gift of fortitude is offered to us that we need not fear the world's rejection.

Similarly, we can think about all the times we have been confused by a situation and haven't known what to do.

When we've sought the right words to say.

When we've tried to make a good decision.

When we've tried not to sin, but to do the right thing.

For all the times the Lord has invited us to follow his guidance

Whenever we've called upon the Lord's name

Whenever we have called upon the Lord for advice or wish we had done so, we were in need of the Holy Spirit's gift of **counsel**

When ever we seek to do the right thing, we are relying on the Holy Spirit's gift of counsel.

The disciples used this gift of counsel to answer questions like whether or not the Gentiles could be admitted to the faith without first observing the Mosaic law, they used the gift of counsel to determine how to care for the needs of the Greek and Hebrew speaking widows, they called upon the Holy Spirit's gift of counsel to help them make right judgments in the own lives and for the good of the people entrusted to their care. We, too, can do the same thing each day of our lives no matter how big or small the issue.

Now just as the disciples who walked with the Lord on earth spent these nine days preparing for the Holy Spirit's coming, so we too who have been gathered here in the presence of the Lord should pray and ask for his gift of the Holy Spirit.

Each of his Seven gifts were poured out upon us in a special way in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Yet while the gift of Confirmation is only given once, we need to ask the the Lord, the Holy Spirit, to receive it each and everyday of our lives, we need to utilize it each and every day of our lives.

And so we take the time to call to mind all those instances in our lives when we need the Holy Spirit's gifts of **fortitude** and **counsel**.

We think of when we should have asked for these gifts, the times when we tried to do it on our own, all the times we did, and how we want to do so in the future.

We take the time now, in silence to ask the Lord to not only pour out this gift upon us but to teach us to call upon him in those moments of challenge and weakness, confusion and bafflement, that we may not try to do it on our own, but to rely on his manifold love.