

ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL WITNESS TALK

PRESENTED BY: DICK COOLEN

APRIL 29-30, 2017

Prayer:

**"Holy Spirit come and guide us as we open our hearts to the needs of God's Holy people, the church. In Jesus name we pray"
AMEN AMEN**

I have been honored to talk about the Annual Catholic Appeal, or as I see it, opening our hearts and minds to The Blessings God has for us to draw us near to Him and his truth, Jesus.

I am excited when I marvel at how the Holy Spirit has changed St. Gabriel's over the 41 years I have been here into a spirit-filled parish on fire with holy people who not only seek God's will in their lives but take action to do so, WOW!

I see more of God's holy people involved in all the ministries. Those who went through RCIA are now leading others to bring Jesus in to their lives. The music ministries are lifting up the congregation in song. The Pastoral Assistance for Education has more programs to help everyone. Plus numerous other ministries just as active and important. These are truly exceptional gifts from the Holy Spirit.

Many years ago I found in the Old Testament, that God's chosen people practiced tithing or giving ten percent of their earnings and the blessing God bestowed on those who put God first in their life. I thought this would bring me into a closer relationship to Him. When I began giving ten percent, the blessings came at a rate faster than I could keep track. So I said, "Okay, Holy Spirit, everything I have is yours, you are now my accountant. You will guide me in how much, where and when you want me to spend your gifts of money, time and talent. That was a great burden lifted. AMEN

Speaking of Blessings, the other night, unable to sleep, I remembered the song by Irving Berlin, "Count your blessings". (Sing)

"When you are weary and cannot sleep, just count your blessing instead of sheep, and you'll go to sleep counting your blessings" Pause

Take it from me - Don't do this. I was awake from 11:30 pm to 4:30 am. And still had not finished counting!

I doubt that God requires us to count all the blessings He gives us. Instead a heartfelt, "Thank You, Lord" will do just fine. I remember an old saying "Keep your eye on the donut and not the hole." In other words keep seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance for the continued work He has for us and don't look

back, because there is much to do.

Deacon John Ricciardi, in one of his recent homilies, said "If you have come here to see God, He is not here!! Why? Because you brought Him with you!!"

In the Greek language there are many symbols for God. You are most familiar with the Greek Symbols for Man, a circle with the arrow up (a shield and spear), for woman, a circle with a cross at the bottom (a mirror). But the symbol for God used in scriptures was a Circle with the word "TRUTH" in the middle - meaning all-encompassing TRUTH or universal TRUTH. In Greek, that is "Katholikos" or in English "Catholic".

When Jesus answered, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6. People knew he was stating He was God. That's why our Eucharist Bread is round. When we say "Eucharist: (Thanksgiving) we are giving thanks to God for sending Jesus our Savior (the Bread of Life) who gave us The Holy Spirit for our daily life.

The early church used the name, "The Way", but now we realize that Jesus is in us by the way of the Holy Spirit.

"Do you not know that that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you received from God? You are not your own." 1 Corinthians 6:19 that's the reason we are called Catholics. God is in us. Like Deacon John said, you brought God with you.

We have sort of a pilot light burning inside of us. To ignite this fire, God has sent us the Energizer Bunny in the form of Father Phuong. The Holy Spirit is so much a part him, because it's not possible for any human to keep the schedule and the pace which he keeps. What a blessing he is to us.

The Holy Spirit is always here for us. Sometimes we have to be quiet to hear His guidance. In my case, the Holy Spirit came from my wife Linda, who is one of my many blessings. She has trouble remembering what day it is and always asks if we should go to Mass. I took this as a prompting of the Holy Spirit to attend Daily Eucharist. This has helped me to focus on being in God's world "If you were in the world, it would love you as its own; instead, the world hates you because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." John 15:19

A few years ago my wife's cousin had a hard time believing in God and His promises. The Holy Spirit prompted me to write to him. I told the Holy Spirit, I didn't really know how to write. So He sent me an editor to help me. My friend is a professional journalist, and not only great as an editor but friend and teacher. The Holy Spirit also sent me a brother in Christ who puts it up on a Blog. Here's the link:

<https://wordpress.com/stats/day/dickcoolenblog.wordpress.com>

The Holy Spirit also tells me what to write and guides me in recalling what Jesus spoke. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate (The Holy Spirit) to be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot receive Him nor know Him. But you do know Him, for He abides with you and He will be in you." John 14:16

I write my blog in exactly 600 words so it can be read in 3 minutes. The 600 represent the creation days of 6 times 100. I now have about 200 people on the email list. The main topic is the Gifts from God. The most recent discusses the Gift of Prayer. The next one, about The Gift of Loss, is at my editor now.

The Holy Spirit has SIXTY ministries in our Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle whose main goal is to help anyone who is in need regardless of their belief. In fact the Holy Spirit hires all people, no matter what denomination, as long as they wish to serve God. Pause

The Catholic Community Services ministry has given me the gift of a caretaker, who gives me a respite of five hours a week from my care-giving ministry at home. Praise God.

Where you are sitting, there are some Support Cards, along with several brochures showing what ministries the Holy Spirit has established. Pass them out to those around you. There are four of us at the altar, including Father. Bring me four cards so that we can fill them out with you. I don't want anyone to miss out on the Lord's blessings!

Name... I'll use the name my mother gave me: Richard Joseph Coolen

Address: Okay, Phone: Okay: email: Okay

My Total Pledge: Just a minute I'll check with my accountant The Holy Spirit, you do the same.

Holy Spirit what should be my pledge? The recommended amount is \$365 and I have a year to fulfill it and our goal at ST Gabriel's is \$86,888.00? (PAUSE)

Hmm! That much! Okay. That's a whole number followed by many zeros, or as you say, Circles. I guess that makes it easier for accounting purposes. (Pause) What's that Holy Spirit?

Yes. I know The Father loves a Cheerful and Joyful giver! Amen to that!!! PAUSE

Let us now thank God... Thank you Father for your many blessings in our lives and giving us the opportunity to serve your Holy People by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and thank my many brothers and sisters in Christ who have held me up in prayer today. **Amen, AMEN**