

One of the foundational pieces of our spiritual journey is this: to fully receive the invitation to ongoing transformation. To see, to hear, and to perceive in a new and deeper way. To allow basic truths to settle deeper into our minds and hearts. To become wiser and stronger. This reflection is written in the hope that today, on this celebration of the feast of Pentecost, something will change for each and every one of us.

The first thing we might notice is the fifty-day wait for the coming of the promised Spirit. Longer than the waiting period of the Advent season, longer still than the recent journey through Lent. And yet, when it happens, when the Spirit enters into our very being, we are reminded that God is faithful. Jesus, who lives in a deep relationship of communion with our Creator and Sustainer, promised it would happen. It took a while for it to happen. Good things usually take time.

To help us to ‘hold on’ during the times of pain-filled and fear-filled waiting, we must do as they did. The apostles and disciples waited, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, in the upper room. They did not isolate, alone and unsupported, in dark caves and hidden recesses. Yes, the door was locked, and yes, they were afraid. Given the political and religious climate, there was also a certain amount of wisdom in their decision to keep the door locked.

They were fortunate to have Mary with them. The woman who approached times of waiting by pondering things in her heart. Only the grace of God made it possible for her to ‘hold on’ with deep trust in the promises of God. Her life gave her every reason to doubt: an untimely pregnancy; giving birth away from home and all that was familiar; escaping into Egypt and living in exile; and an adolescent son who went missing and who offered a difficult-to-understand explanation. We ponder her wisdom in inviting Jesus to begin his public ministry in Cana, and her incredible strength as she stood at the foot of the cross.

When we pray, *Hail Mary, full of grace*, we are acknowledging that God had blessed her with abundant grace. She was needed in that room. While the others were strong in some ways, they were also weak. While they had been

carefully chosen, by Jesus, to live and to work with him, they were desperately in need of grace. In the crisis, they had all run away.

Her presence in the upper room would have offered some solidity and stability. Most certainly, the challenges and uncertainties of that difficult waiting time were eased by her lived example of ongoing and steadfast faithfulness.

They stepped out of that room deeply transformed. They were made willing, and able, to risk their very lives in service of the mission to which they had been called. When we pray, asking Mary's intercession *now, and at the hour of our death*, we are also asking for the transforming grace of Pentecost. We need Mary's intercession in our lives. We are also called to be unafraid.

Fear silences us. We say nothing in the face of injustice. We are so often hesitant to step out, to risk speaking the truth as best we can understand it. We would do well to return to Jesus, listening again to the promise he offered:

*"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you
another Advocate to be with you always ...
The Advocate, the Holy Spirit
that the Father will send in my name
– he will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I told you ..."*
John 14: 16, 26

We pray for the grace to *know* when to wait, when to speak, what to say, and how best to say it. We wait. We listen. We pray. *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*