Fr. Dan’s Reflections:

I want to start by once again thanking everyone for your generosity and follow-through in supporting the parish during this time. I know there are hardships out there and the support you give shows how important your faith and the parishes are in your life. I heard from the bishop this week and he is allowing the parishes to begin daily masses as long as we follow social distancing and the other guidelines for gatherings. This will allow us to see how our practices work and determine if we need to make any changes before we begin Sunday masses. I see this as a light at the end of the tunnel. We know at some point we will be allowed to gather on Sundays again.

We all like spectacular fireworks. They are exciting, impressive, exhilarating. The Church's first Pentecost had some spectacular fireworks. The Apostles and other Christians were gathered "in one place together". We don't know exactly where, probably it was somewhere inside or near the Temple in Jerusalem since right after the fireworks, crowds started to gather. It may have been the same large room where Jesus and the Apostles had eaten the Last Supper. We are not certain.

So they were all in one place, and then a thunderous noise like a strong wind, like a tornado, came from the sky. And then flames appeared. Flames of fire just appeared out of nowhere, spontaneously, hovering in the air. And these flames divided up and started floating through the air until they came to rest on each of the people gathered.

But the fireworks didn't stop there. All of a sudden the Christians started speaking in languages that they didn't know. A crowd had gathered by now, with visitors from all over the world who were in Jerusalem for the festival. Each one heard the Christians explaining the gospel in their language.

It was a dramatic, spectacular display. But we would be wrong to conclude from this that the Holy Spirit's normal way of acting in our life is through dramatic fireworks. In fact, it's just the opposite. God's action in our life is most often gentle and hardly perceptible at first.

How does Jesus send the Spirit to his Apostles after his resurrection? He breathes on them - quietly and subtly. How does St Paul describe the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church? Like the soul of a body - powerful, essential, but invisible and subtle. The Holy Spirit works quietly.

Think of a symphony orchestra. It's made up of a hundred different musicians and dozens of instruments. The conductor is the visible focus of everyone's attention, both the musicians and the audience. And yet, is the conductor the real source of the music? No, the composer is. In front of every musician is a music stand holding a few pages marked with black dots - the score, the music. No one in the audience sees the score, but that score is what brings all those musicians together, coordinates everyone's efforts, and produces a beautiful, inspiring performance.

That's what the Church is like. The Pope is the conductor, guaranteed by God to stay faithful to the musical score. We are all musicians, contributing our unique talents to the symphony of holiness that resounds throughout the world and history. And the Holy Spirit is the living musical score, the one who tells us what notes to play, when to play them, how fast to play them, how loud and soft.
He is the silent force behind the power of every saint, every Christian, and the Church as a whole.

There is only one condition attached to this gift. To experience God's transforming presence in our lives, we have to obey his will out of love: "Whoever loves me will keep my word," as Jesus says in the Gospel. All of us want to obey God's will in our lives - some want to do so passionately, others reluctantly, but we all want to - otherwise we wouldn't be here, reading this.

But how do we know what God's will is? The Holy Spirit quietly reveals God's will to us in two ways. First, he inspires and guides the teaching of the Church. We have:

- the commandments of the Bible,
- the instructions in the Catechism,
- the examples of the saints,
- the regular updates from the pope's encyclicals - the Holy Spirit wants us to know how a Christian should live, and he gives us the Church to keep us posted.

In this way, the Church, under the pope's leadership, is like the conductor of a symphony: we have to keep our eyes on him if we want to play our part well.

But the Church can only give commandments and guidelines that apply to everyone. That tells God's will 85% of the time. But 15% of the time we are faced with opportunities and challenges unique to our life circumstances. That's when the Holy Spirit guides us more personally, through inspirations, through his seven Gifts, through wise advice.

In both ways, he is hard at work, quietly but surely, building up our happiness and that of those around us. In today's Mass, when he renews his commitment to guide us, let's renew our commitment to follow and obey - not to experience spiritual fireworks, but to feed the fire of God's love in our hearts, whose light and heat we all need so much.