

**Homily – Third Sunday of Lent
Intercollegiate Confirmations – March 3, 2024**

Are we truly the people of the Holy Spirit? I hope so!

Upon the stone of the ten commandments, the tribes of Israel accept being the people of God. The Lord guides and cares for them on their journey through the desert. Although the people break the covenant a thousand times, God remains faithful. At the end of the way, Jesus reveals himself to be the fullness of the law and the covenant. He is both true God and true Man. He is the true identity of the Holy People of God. Through the Holy Spirit, He reveals to us who we truly are. And although accepting the Lord means allowing Him to overturn our lives, as he did with the tables of the temple merchants; even as our sin can kill the only Son of God on a cross; God remains faithful. From the cross, Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes Jesus present in the world and in our lives. At the end of the desert journey of this life, the resurrected Christ Jesus awaits us to give us new life in Himself.

To whoever wants to be liberated and saved, God insists that they must be part of his people. To be members of the people of God, we cannot worship anything made by human hands. There is only one true God. Even so, the people often follow false gods. They also offer sacrifices to God when their hearts are far from the Lord. They thought it was enough to offer animal sacrifices, but with an arrogant and haughty heart. However, God cares about what is inside the heart.

The relationship of the people of Israel with God deteriorated, as sometimes happens to us. Jesus denounces the error of an external worship, merely of appearance, which turns religion into a market. The Lord proclaims that what truly pleases God is for us to offer Him our

contrite and humbled spirit. Jesus himself shows us the way: For our sake God *“made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”* (2 Cor 5:21). Christ is the way. The Lord tells us: *“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”* (Mk 8:34). But we must not fear; the Holy Spirit is our guide.

Pope Francis explains that to change our attitudes, from hatred, vengeance and bearing grudges, to loving our neighbor as ourselves, we need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Father says: *“God’s goodness and beauty attract us, and the Holy Spirit is able to purify, transform and shape us day by day.”* However, he says, we must make an effort to be converted, *“to experience a heartfelt conversion.”*

True worship, true religion, true relationship with God, consists in offering and giving our lives in favor of our sisters and brothers for the love of God. That is why Saint Paul says, in the first reading, that *“we proclaim Christ crucified.”* For the world this is absurd, it is a stumbling block or foolishness. However, for us it is the strength and wisdom of God (Cf. 1 Cor), gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit will enable you to proclaim, with your lives, that carrying our daily burdens with joy for the love of God means participating in God’s great love for humanity. For us, the cross is the way to partake in the resurrection. We must not fear, because the Lord will rebuild us *“in three days.”* The Holy Spirit will guide you through the desert of life into the promised land of eternal life.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us allow the Holy Spirit bear much fruit in our lives.