

**Homily – Wednesday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time
Televised Mass with Senior Staff – May 22, 2024**

Today's Memorial, of Saint Rita of Cascia, together with the readings of the Mass and the recent feasts of Pentecost and Mary, Mother of the Church, provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the profound mystery of the Church, the Holy People of God. Drawing her life from the Eucharist, the Church is the sacrament of salvation, a visible and efficacious sign and instrument of the communion between God and humanity. This sacred reality is always greater than our understanding, yet it calls us to delve deeper into its mysteries with faith and humility. The lesson that John receives from the Lord in today's gospel extends to us, as members of the Church.

In the life of St. Rita of Cascia, we find a remarkable example of how to live as true members of the Church. St. Rita – who lived in the late 14th and early 15th centuries – was a woman of deep faith and unwavering obedience to the Holy Spirit. Her life was marked by extraordinary challenges, yet she continually sought to see the world as God sees it, guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Letter of James reminds us today of the fleeting nature of our earthly existence: *“You are a puff of smoke that appears briefly and then disappears.”* This passage urges us to live in the will of God, doing what we know to be right. St. Rita exemplified this teaching in her life. Despite the tremendous personal suffering she endured, including abuse, the violent death of her husband, and the loss of her two sons, she remained steadfast in doing what was right. She forgave her husband's murderers – a profound act of love and mercy that only the Holy Spirit could inspire.

St. Rita's life teaches us that being open to the Holy Spirit allows us to transcend our human limitations. She loved beyond the evil done to her. This inclusiveness and openness to God's work in unexpected ways call us to embrace a broader vision of the Kingdom, one that goes beyond our narrow understanding and biases.

We may not always see where the Holy Spirit is working. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, blows where He wills, often in ways and places we do not expect. This requires from us a profound faith and humility, trusting in God's greater plan even when it is beyond our comprehension. St. Rita's life was a testament to this trust. She knew the right thing to do, and she did it, as James exhorts us. Her story encourages us to remain faithful, to forgive, and to love, even in the face of great suffering and adversity.

The Eucharist is the nourishment that sustains us in this journey. Pope Francis has said: (quote) *"The Lord gathers us around his table, making himself bread for us. The bread of the feast on the table of the children creates sharing, strengthens bonds, has the flavor of communion."* (end of quote). The criteria that Jesus considers when indicating "who are among us" are the works of mercy. The Eucharist – from which the Church draws her life – is Food for mercy.

May the Holy Spirit, through the Eucharist, help us receive the grace to be merciful and to see with the eyes of faith. May the example of St. Rita help us see beyond our limitations, becoming true signs and instruments of God's communion with humanity. And may the comforting protection of our Lady of Guadalupe fill us with true courage, which comes from our shared faith.