

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

It is a part of life we live with every day. And very few of us know how to handle it. We don't choose it – but it often chooses us. From doctor's offices to airports, check-out lines to traffic. This 'it' emerges and tries the patience of all. What is this infamous "It"? None other than the experience of waiting.

From life to death waiting exists. And no one escapes it – not even the Apostles. On this 7th Sunday of Easter we find the apostles at an in between time. Jesus departed the world at his Ascension which we celebrated a few days ago and the Holy Spirit has yet to appear – a feast we will celebrate next Sunday on Pentecost. In the meantime, the apostles are huddled in the upper room. The upper room becomes in a real sense a waiting room to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first reading today from Acts indicates that this upper room was crowded. Among those in the crowd were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James. Imagine the apostles are only faced with the burden of waiting, but also they had to do so in the context of a crowd. Interestingly enough, though, this waiting was not marked by idleness or frustration, but unity. In fact Luke states, "All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Waiting then became a wonderful opportunity for shared prayer. In our own lives, waiting need not signal an interruption or a moment of anxious frustration. Waiting can become an invitation for prayer. And keep in mind that the prayer is not always about talking to God as much as it is listening to him and attempting to read the experiences of our lives.

Prayer is a huge reservoir of wisdom and insight to be tapped. When I was a child, our family used to dine out at a family diner. This restaurant was known not only for its' food but also for its' children's menus. One of the great things about the children's menu was that you could color and write on it. There were even little exercises to occupy the child's mind and among them was the dot to dot one. There were dots – but with a pencil these dots could be connected and a beautiful image of something would appear. When we develop an attentive listening posture – prayer allows us to connect the dots of our lives and gain a deeper understanding of who we are and whose we are.

A month ago with the death of John Paul II, the church found herself in an interesting time between what was and what would be. Throughout that time the Church turned to prayer. In a real sense, the whole world became a waiting room – expecting, anticipating the selection of the next Pope.

Our individual days are marked with an array of instances in which we are called to wait and wait and wait. This waiting, as exasperating as it can be, can become a grace-filled opportunity for prayer and communion with God. The next time then life puts us in a waiting room let us resist the temptation to watch TV or reach for the magazine. Instead let us open the Bible, the prayer book, grab our rosary and pray. And if we so wish, we can be even more discreet and subtle-by praying the Lord's Prayer, repeating an exclamation like "Jesus remember me for I am a sinner", or simply just listening to God and allow him to connect the dots.

This week, however, as we wait for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let's pray, "Come Holy Spirit, Come." In the end, waiting is really a six letter word – PRAYER. And you know what, because of that waiting isn't so bad after all.