

Pentecost Reflection: 50 Days of Joy and Unity

Soon we will celebrate the Ascension of Jesus. During the half-term, we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost. And fifty days before Pentecost, we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. Fifty days to rejoice and give glory to God, following the forty days of repentance during Lent. The Easter season is longer than Lent, reminding us that light has overcome darkness.

At Pentecost, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, with its seven gifts and twelve fruits, dwelling in us and reminding us of our Dignity as children of God.

After the Resurrection, in the Upper Room, Jesus did not say to His disciples, “Where were you? I told you I would suffer, die, and rise again. Why are you hiding here?” Nor did He say to Peter, “I told you that you would deny me three times. Without me, you see your weakness, don’t you?” He did not ask, “Why are you ashamed? What are you afraid of?” Instead, He said: “**Peace be with you.**”

Jesus comes to His friends, looks upon them with love, raises them up, and restores their Dignity as children of God, beloved sons and daughters of the Father.

Dignity is one of our core values. It is a cornerstone of Catholic Social Teaching. It is a truth continually proclaimed by the Church, and one lived out by our patron saint, St John Southworth, who served the poor and the sick in Westminster with compassion.

This Dignity of being a child of God is given to each one of you.

On 4 October 2026, we will mark the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi, whose life and spirituality continue to inspire Christians across the world — a Jubilee year proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV to guide us all. St Francis’ life speaks first of a deep search for true joy. After seeking fulfilment in worldly pleasures, he ultimately found lasting joy in encountering Christ.

This evening, when you return home, take a moment to be aware that the Father looks upon you with love. Tomorrow morning, as you brush your teeth, pause and look at yourself in the mirror, humbly remembering that you are made in the image and likeness of God. At breakfast, look at the person sitting next to you and recognise that they, too, are God’s masterpiece. St Francis felt a strong revulsion towards lepers. But one day, he chose to overcome this disgust: he approached a leper, gave him alms, and then embraced him. This act is often seen as a decisive moment in his spiritual conversion, a turning point towards a life centred on humility, compassion, and the

Dignity of every person. St Francis's example reminds us that real renewal in the Church comes through holiness and personal conversion.

The peace given at the Resurrection is for you, because the risen Christ calls you by name. The love and joy given by the Holy Spirit is for you, to centre your life on Christ, with humility, to see the Dignity of every person. How will you respond?

In the days after Pentecost, you will notice the green liturgical colour returning — the fresh green of grass renewed and nourished by water. It is a reminder of the life that flows from the water from the side of Christ, a life that continues to grow quietly, day and night, beyond our understanding.

This is the Good News: Christ is Risen and He is telling you, "Peace be with you."

May the Dignity you carry as a child of God become a light and a source of hope for others, so that all you will encounter may come to know that they, too, are infinitely loved.

In the small chapel of San Damiano, Francis heard a voice from the crucifix saying: "Francis, go and rebuild my Church." At first, he took these words in a literal sense and began repairing the chapel that was in poor condition. But later, he understood that this call also had a spiritual meaning: to help renew the Church through a life of simplicity, poverty, and love.

Like St Francis, may you hear God's call to rebuild His Church, **the call to be a saint**. May the children entrusted to your care come to recognise their worth through your gaze. May the Father's kindness reach them through your words. May your attitude reflect the trust in God that dwells within you. May you be bearers of God's light in your family and in your school.

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