

Mass of the Holy Spirit
 Boston College High School
 September 7, 2022

Readings: Genesis 1:1-2:3; Psalm 104; Acts 2:1-21; Mt 3: 1-3, 13-17

God is God who creates, a God who labors. And we are called to co-labor with God in the ongoing work of creation. We are called to be God's collaborators in caring for creation, in caring for our world.

But that work of caring seems to get more difficult every day. Our world is beset with daunting challenges. We see terrible suffering caused by war, hunger, drought, flooding—a third of Pakistan under water—wildfires, and extreme heat. The world still struggles with the Covid pandemic, the United States with an opioid pandemic impacting communities and families all around the country. We have a pandemic of racism, polarization and division. Add to that our own daily struggles and the struggles of those whom we love.

It can all seem overwhelming, intractable, unsolvable. But, *no*. It would certainly be overwhelming for any one person acting alone. But not for us, who are not alone.

Us. This community gathered in prayer on this first full day of the new academic year.

Us. This subset of God's holy people joined together asking for the gift of God's own Spirit in this Mass of the Holy Spirit. Us.

In fact, I can't think of another group more committed and ready to take up the challenges around us. Challenges that require creativity, imagination and innovation. Check. We have the Shields Center.

Challenges that require global engagement, collaboration and partnerships. Check. The Hyde Center.

Challenges that require the creation of a more just, inclusive, equitable world. Challenges that need a group of people committed to being an anti-racist institution, one that sees clearly that every person, without exception, is created in God's own image. Check. The Center for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Challenges that require dedicated, knowledgeable, highly skilled leaders of exceptional integrity. Check. The Mike White Center for Emerging Leaders.

Challenges that require people grounded in a life-giving, sustaining tradition which calls each of us to our truest selves, to deep gratitude, generosity, kindness, and a shared commitment to the common good. Check. The Center for Ignatian Identity and Formation.

Add in the outstanding academic program, athletic teams that compete at the highest level, clubs and activities for every interest, and all the behind the scenes, under the radar work in advancement, finance, IT, facilities. It's 1500 plus extraordinary people gathered in one place—everyone here. For good measure throw in the alumni, families, the board. We got this. We got this.

But this year we have even more. The Arrupe Division has long had its advisement program and now with the inauguration of the House System in the high school we take that to the next level. The houses ground us more firmly and surely than ever before in the core of Jesuit education: the personal care of

every student, and really of every member of the community. We can only care if we know we are cared for. We can only be courageous if we know we're safe. We can only love, if we know we are loved.

The motto of the Graduate School of Education at Harvard is "Learn to change the world." It's a brilliant slogan, and very Harvard. But we are about more than that here. We're about learning to love the world. We're about embracing the world in all its messiness, its pain and suffering, its seemingly infinite number of challenges and crises.

Mr. Lewis often reminds us that in addition to a great academic program the education here at BC High also has an affective and physical dimension. BC High is about head, heart and hands. But let's be clear. If we're doing it right we'll frequently be confused and frustrated, our hearts will be broken far more than once, and our hands will be pretty dirty most of the time. We'll often fail and want to give up. But that's what it means to embrace the world, to love the world.

When our school patron, Ignatius Loyola, was canonized in 1622 the pope at the time said that "Ignatius had a heart big enough to hold the universe."

As people who study and work here at BC High, this Jesuit, Catholic school, we are all heirs to Ignatius' legacy. How big are our hearts? I know I am a long way from having a heart as big as Ignatius'. [Honestly, there are times when it can barely hold me never mind anyone or anything else.] But God's Spirit is a Spirit who expands hearts, transforming them into great, capacious spaces with room beyond our imaginings. That's what we celebrate here in this space as we gather for this Mass of the Holy Spirit.

In the Genesis reading, we heard God's creating and life-giving Spirit—that Spirit is in you.

In Psalm 104, we sang of God's renewing, reconciling, healing Spirit—that Spirit is in you.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter was filled with God's prophetic, proclaiming, unifying Spirit—that Spirit is in you.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we encountered God's loving Spirit, the Spirit which fills the voice from heaven saying "You are my beloved. I take delight in you."—that Spirit is in you.

It is that same Spirit whom each of our House Patrons knew intimately. It is what links them as our own cloud of witnesses and joins us to them. It is the Spirit that gave them their courage and commitment; their hope, vision, and joy; their desire and ability to keep going forward overcoming challenges, obstacles, opposition; facing their own fears, anxieties and doubts. It is the Spirit that gave them hearts big enough to hold the universe.

And it's that same Spirit we call upon and want to know. To fire up our courage and commitment; our hope, vision and joy; our desire and ability to keep going forward despite obstacles and opposition, facing our own fears, anxieties and doubts. To keep making a way where seemingly there is no way. To expand our hearts beyond our wildest imaginings.

We ask for the gift of God's creating, life-giving, renewing, reconciling, healing, prophetic, proclaiming, unifying and loving Spirit. It is at the center of our prayer here this morning. Let's keep it at the center of everything we do all year long. Come Holy Spirit and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit, O God, and renew the face of the earth. Starting here, now, on this campus, with us. We're ready. Amen.