

Jesus said, “It is the spirit that gives life; the words I speak are spirit and life”.

Today I welcome faculty, staff, and new and returning students, trustees, family and friends of Carroll College to this Mass of the Holy Spirit in which we invoke God’s blessings and guidance upon our endeavors in this new school year.

In my years as a student and teacher at Carroll College I’ve noticed many traditions and patterns over the years. Such as at the beginning of the year when new students are gathered, it is inevitable that you will hear two questions, “Where are you from? And what’s your major?” When returning friends are gathered the most natural question heard is, “So how was your summer?”

And so I am certain that you want to know how I spent my summer was. My friend and classmate, Fr Tom Haffey and I spent 2 and half weeks in England, Scotland, and Wales to experience their history, art, culture and food, that is, their spirit and the life. We saw the usual tourist sights such as Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, the Tower of London and Windsor Castle; we went on to Stonehenge, Stratford-on-Avon, Salisbury, the Roman ruins at Bath, and then Chester, and York. In Edinburgh we sampled haggis, the national dish of Scotland, a unique combination of oatmeal, minced sheep heart, lung, and liver and then boiled the stomach, which, in my opinion, is not to be missed. Sampled, yes; but to be missed, no.

I especially enjoyed learning how their history, their spirit and life, are expressed through language. For example, children’s nursery rhymes such as ‘Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?’ and Ring around the Rosy and slogans such as letting the cat out of the bag’ and ‘scaring the daylights out of someone’ refer to significant historical events I also learned how the ‘loo’ got its name and that a tip, t-i-p is a little gift you give to someone To Improve Punctuality. I also observed hardly any pick up trucks at all in England, and none at all with gun racks or dogs.

To observe their spirit and life was a wonderful experience for me. But now the summer is over and we are beginning a new academic year at Carroll, many of you for the first time. What is your

hope for this new year? For me, it is to live more fully the excellent life and Spirit of Carroll College which we have so abundantly.

In today's gospel from the 6th chapter of John Jesus proclaims that he has come to bring his spirit and life to the world, to us, to you and to me. Jesus proclaims that he brings life to us through his life, his death and his resurrection and invites each of us to be community with him in the spirit. St. Paul in Galatians identifies the fruits of that promised Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and self control. This revelation is transmitted to us through the teachings of Jesus, his words, and through sharing his flesh and blood, the sacrament of the Eucharist. Those who accept the invitation believe that Jesus has the words of eternal life and that he is the holy one of God.

But many of Jesus followers upon hearing Jesus' teaching in the gospel broke away and would not remain in his company any longer because his teachings seemed difficult to understand and impossible to achieve. And then Jesus poses this question to his disciples, "Do you want to leave me too?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced that you are God's holy one." Some left; some stayed.

Those who stayed were assured of the Lord's abiding presence when he said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst" (Mat 18:20). Being gathered together in the name of Jesus as we are at this gathering suggests faith that is deeper than the mere recitation of the name of Jesus or a mere random gathering of uninvolved or uncommitted individuals. To gather in his name means to take seriously the teaching that the Spirit of Jesus abides in each of us individually and with us as the community of Carroll College. We believe that the Risen Christ is still doing his through us. The great challenge of course, is to learn to listen to the Spirit of Jesus in one another.

And where do we, as the Carroll community, need to listen to one another this year: May I suggest:

- when we discuss how our community promotes both career preparation and value of enlightenment and knowledge for its own sake;
- when we discuss how academic freedom and Catholic identity complement one another; that faith and reason are constitutive elements of our institutional identity;
- when we discuss that we are a college of both the liberal arts and sciences;
- when we acknowledge and celebrate our Montana, Northwestern, and diocesan roots and seek to grow wings that will take us to national and international destinations; as President Trebon has said so many times that the whole world is our classroom;
- when we discuss how we can better promote the intellectual, social, imaginative, and spiritual development of all our community not only in the classroom, but also in community residential living, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- when we discuss how we are both authentically Catholic and carry on serious academic dialogue with philosophy, science, the liberal arts, the believing community, and with all persons of good will.

I do not propose solutions here but I do point out challenges and the opportunities for us to sit down with one another for dialog, communication, and community rather than walking away from the table because we're not up to the challenge as did some in today's gospel.

Listening to one another is the heart of the discernment process which can be used for decision-making and conflict resolution. It is not easy to let go of *my* dream and assist in helping *our* dream to be born. Yet the Christ, the Spirit, who dwells in our midst can bring about unity in diversity. Since Jesus promised to be with us in community, let us remember that promise as we come together so we may experience the life and Spirit abiding in us though out this academic year.

Allow me to close this reflection on spirit and life with words from Dr. Monica Helwig, a distinguished Catholic theologian and educator who had been scheduled to speak at Carroll on Catholicism and higher education this year but died unexpectedly September 30, 2005. She wrote, "In my journey through the twentieth century as a Catholic scholar, what have I really learned?"

-First of all, that we cannot keep the Holy Spirit out of the church, no matter how much we try to domesticate the whole enterprise.

-Secondly, that the church is wiser and more faithful when it listens -discerningly to many voices, even those from outside its own boundaries.

-Thirdly, that we, all of us, are the bearers of tradition and the shapers of it for the future, and that we have immense wealth entrusted to us. --Fourthly, never to be afraid of the truth, but to seek the truth with humility and faith and the readiness to be proved wrong and to begin the search again.

-Fifthly, that conflict is a part of growth and the shaping of tradition, but that hatred and rejection of those who differ need not be.

-And last, that as educated Catholics of our times we are a part of a very important intellectual contributions to our society and to the world – a contribution that is an integral component of the redemption.”

I pray that throughout this academic year by God’s grace we may truly be spirit and life to one another.

Rev. Daniel B. Shea, Ph.D.

Mass of the Holy Spirit Homily