

Pentecost Vigil

When I a little kid, I could ride a tricycle just fine, but like other little kids, I could not ride a bicycle. That required more balance than I had. I watched older kids ride their bikes, but I just could not do what they did.

My parents did what a lot of other parents did. They put training wheels onto a bicycle. So I could ride a bike, but not really. I still needed extra wheels in order to make it go. Otherwise I would fall off. Before long I discovered I was riding the bike without those wheels. So my dad took them off. It was a great feeling to ride like bigger kids.

The same thing happened with prayers. At first I wanted to pray like other people, but I needed help. My parents had to show me how to fold my hands, how to kneel down, and what words to say. They gave me spiritual training wheels, so that I could develop my friendship with God. Now I can pray in many different ways, but it was because I practiced when I was little.

Saint Paul says to the Romans that “we do not know how to pray as we ought,” but “the [Holy] Spirit ... comes to the aid of our weakness.” So here is the interesting thing. We never completely learn how to pray. We always need help to pray in better ways. Sometimes things go wrong in our lives, and we don’t know what to do or what to say. We ask God to help us, but sometimes we’re not even sure what words to say to God. This is where the Holy Spirit will help us. All we have to do is place ourselves in God’s presence, and the Spirit will help us do the rest. The Holy Spirit is like training wheels on the bicycle of the spiritual life. As long as we try, we will find we have better balance than we realized because God will actually help us pray.

Children, as you celebrate your first communion, we rejoice with you on this special day. Through communion you will have a close relationship with Jesus Christ all your life. You may at times not know exactly what to say or do. But pray every day, even when you’re not sure how. Come to communion every Sunday, even when it is not convenient. You will find that you can handle all the other things that happen in life. And like a kid on a bicycle, you will feel free.