

Why aren't you accessing God's power and light?

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor delivered this homily May 24.

In many towns the local electric company's name includes the words "Power" or "Light." In Las Vegas it's the Nevada Power Company; in my hometown it was the city "water and light department" even though what they sell is electricity, which is only potential power and light.

You still have to plug in appliances in order to convert electricity into power and light, if that is what you want. It's like calling Exxon a travel company because they sell gasoline, which is only potential travel. Electricity contains great potential, but we have to use the potential in order to actually get power and light.

Today is Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the apostles with grace, divine electricity — potential power and light. My favorite thing to do as bishop is to administer the sacrament of confirmation, the personal Pentecost of those who receive it, strengthening them with divine power and light.

Here the word "confirm" retains its original meaning in Latin: "firm" means "strong", "con" means "with," hence "confirm" means to "strengthen with" God's grace. It is true that those being confirmed also "affirm" (which is not the same thing as confirm) they also affirm their baptismal promises. But the main thing is what God does, namely strengthen us with his grace — divine electricity — potential power and light, which we are then to use in service of God and neighbor.

On Pentecost that's what the apostles did. Electrified by the Holy Spirit, they electrified the crowds and began to spread the Good News.

There are probably some of you here today who were confirmed years ago, but who — for whatever reason — still have not responded to God's grace by actually using your still-available access to God's power and light, which is kind of like buying a total electric home and then never turning on the lights, choosing to continue to live in the dark.

But it's not too late to change. Your decision to use — or not use — your access to God's power and light will determine whether you 1) live a spiritually fulfilling life, full of meaning, purpose and direction, energized by courage, insight and virtue, or 2) trudge through a spiritually unfulfilling life, lacking purpose and direction, debilitated by cowardice, selfishness, blindness and futility.

Look around and you will see many unhappy, frustrated people who have exhausted themselves trying to make it through the challenges of life without God's power and light — doomed to failure by their own weakness and ignorance, powerless before temptation, deceived by worldly schemes that promise happiness but cannot deliver.

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit gives us access to a much better way, to which, however, we must respond. Draw on God's grace and use his power and light to accomplish his purposes, and not

only will you be living a life pleasing to the Lord, you will also find that true personal fulfillment that the world cannot give — but which is available to all who live lives fully empowered and enlightened by the same Holy Spirit first received by the apostles on Pentecost and received by each of us on the day of our confirmation.