

May 24, 2026—Solemnity of Pentecost

Last Sunday on the Solemnity of the Ascension we heard Jesus' last words to the apostles: **“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** They knew Jesus was risen, they knew they had a worldwide mission, but what they didn't know was how to go about it, they needed the light of the Holy Spirit!

We just heard the description of Pentecost in the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. The apostles and the Blessed Mother were in the Upper Room where the Last Supper took place. They were praying and waiting, as Jesus told them to do. Then the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in a powerful way. First, there was a mighty wind that shook the house so that the people in the neighborhood were drawn by the noise. Jesus once said, **“The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit”** (John 3:8). The Holy Spirit is mysterious like the wind which can be a gentle breeze or a powerful force. Sometimes we need a gentle nudge, other times we need to be hit over the head with a 2x4. For those who seek Him, the Holy Spirit doesn't leave anyone untouched or unmoved.

The Holy Spirit also manifested Himself by fire! Flames of fire appeared over the apostles' heads. Just like the burning bush of Moses, they were not burnt but perceived the power of God. These humble, for the most part uneducated men, now went forward without fear and spoke to the people gathered around the house. Peter gave the first Christian sermon about the rejection and death and resurrection of Jesus. It told us that 3000 people listened to him, repented of their sins and were baptized that day. Pentecost has long been called the birthday of the Church.

In the Second Reading we heard the outline of St. Paul's important image of the Church as the Body of Christ. He compares the Church to a human body. Just as a body is made up of many members—eyes, ears, arms, hands, etc.—so the Church is made up of many people with many different gifts. **“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.”** He said, we become a member of the Body of Christ through baptism: **“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”**. Paul would make it clear in the Letter to the Colossians that Christ **“is he head of the**

**Body, the Church**” (Col. 1:18). Pope Leo XIII, not our Leo, compared the Holy Spirit to the soul of the human body. The soul animates us, gives us life, so the Holy Spirit gives life to the Body of Christ, the Church. In the celebration of the sacraments, the priest invokes the Holy Spirit at the Epiclesis, which is a Greek word long used in the liturgy to designate this invocation. It’s obvious at Holy Mass because he lays his hands flat over the bread and wine on the altar and the server rings the bells. We receive the power and wisdom and love of the Holy Spirit in each of the sacraments.

St. Paul also told us in the Second Reading that we cannot say “**Jesus is Lord**’, **except by the Holy Spirit.**” Obviously, anyone can say those three words, but it only has meaning when we have received the Holy Spirit and act under His influence; He first came to us in baptism and then was strengthened by Confirmation. To call Jesus our Lord means that we are His disciples, that we submit to Him because He is God. The Jewish people never said the Sacred Name given to Moses, meaning “I Am Who Am” except for the High Priest once a year when he went into the Holy of Holies, the central part of the Temple. They always substituted the name LORD or Adonai, for that Sacred Name. Jesus is true man and true God; He is God; Jesus is Lord!

Satan tears things apart and brings disunity; the Holy Spirit brings peace and unity. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the ability to speak to the people so that they could hear and understand them in their own language. The description of Pentecost takes pains to list the various nations of the Jews with their many different languages. Even though the members of the Catholic Church speak all the languages of the world, there is only one language of faith. We all have the same doctrines, the same Scripture, the same sacraments, the same government of the pope and bishops and pastors. St. Paul put it this way, we have: “**One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all**” (Eph. 4:5).

Satan has tried to destroy the unity of the Church all throughout Christian history. The Holy Spirit has often raised great saints to bring people back to the truth. St. Athanasius fought the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Jesus. He attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD as a young deacon, which decided the question and produced the Nicene Creed which we recite each Sunday. Even so, many still did not accept it; Athanasius dedicated his life to the truth. At one point there was so much division that it became proverbial to say, “**Athanasius against the world**”. In the end he prevailed and the truth of Christ’s divinity was maintained.

We must pray for the unity of the Church and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I highly recommend the three-word prayer: “**Come, Holy Spirit**”. We can say it at a moment’s notice when we need strength and wisdom and courage to live our faith. The Holy Spirit is still as active and as powerful today as He was on the first Pentecost. “**Come, Holy Spirit**”.