

Sermon for the Festival of Pentecost May 24, 2026 jj

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Where's the Holy Spirit? Here we are, gathered together on His big day to celebrate His grand entrance onto the scene. Pentecost was a Jewish festival at first, with little or no prior reference ever being made to the Holy Spirit. It had more to do with the first harvest of crops in the agricultural cycle of Old Testament days. But then, following the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit, the promised Comforter, the one to lead us into all truth, here He is, on this very Day, to breathe life into the Christian Church on earth! Three signs lead the disciples to note His presence among them: the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire appearing over each person's head, and the sudden, miraculous ability for them to speak other languages—and not only that, they spoke intelligible, discernible, full-of-Gospel comfort truths of Jesus in those previously unlearned languages! Given these signs, it would be unmistakable that the Holy Spirit is there, and He's wielding some spectacular Divine power, too.

Only a handful of times in the Bible the Holy Spirit appears like this on His own. Swooping over the face of the waters as creation began or flapping like a dove over Jesus' Baptism and landing on Christ our Savior and our Sin-Bearer. Yet even at those times, where the Holy Spirit is, there is God, working, doing, breathing life, and rescuing and reconciling. The Holy Spirit constantly points not to Himself but to Jesus, to the fulfillment of the Holy Trinity's plan to ransom and recreate mankind back in the image of God that had been lost and corrupted, with all of creation renewed to follow suit. Even in the Old Testament times of the prophets, the Holy Spirit inspired the

words and work of these spokesmen for the Lord, and they pointed the people to the future promised Messiah, our Lord and Savior. Usually the Holy Spirit is hidden in the background, but He is always there, working on the hearts of those like you who hear God's Word, so that you would believe, you would be forgiven, you would be won for the kingdom that will never end. From this first Christian Pentecost Day forward, you become the Pentecost harvest in whom the Lord rejoices!

From the Catechism we learn that the Breath of Jesus gave the Holy Spirit, who was received by the disciples, for the purpose of forgiving sins. Did they breathe in, while Jesus breathed out? It doesn't say, but it wouldn't surprise me. The Holy Spirit, who is the very breath of Jesus, He sets us right with one another and breaks down the walls we can set up to divide us apart. The Apostle Paul names the Holy Spirit as our down-payment and guarantee that our Lord will come through on all He has promised; He is the assurance that landed like a dove upon us in our Baptism so that we are cleansed, forgiven, renewed, and welcome, sinners though we may still be, you and I welcome as a new creation embraced in His everlasting arms. How could we not extend that same love to each other?

How does the Holy Spirit, breath of Jesus, do this? He convicts, (that is, brings forth evidence that demands a judgment) He chastens our wayward soul with the stern law. He brings you to the full awareness that because you fell short of the perfect righteousness that God laid out for you to

follow in the Commandments, you deserve the judgment of guilty. You are left without excuse and your soul in the midst of all this rebellion, self-centeredness and even anxiety over your misfortunes, your soul is left dry, parched and thirsty.

Once this happens, the Holy Spirit seems to back away from the scene. No more wonder-inspiring signs, no more miracles appear. Where does He go in those moments? Are you alone? Has the Third Person of the Holy Trinity abandoned you in your miserable realization that you are a sinner? Of course not, He appears once again when Jesus lifts up His voice at another Jewish festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, and cries out. Come to Me. All you who thirst for My gift of righteousness, come believe in Me, and drink living water. And right alongside these words of Jesus, the Holy Spirit then creates, breathes faith into our heart through the Gospel we hear so that we receive this gift as our own.

The Holy Spirit is there when we hear or read God's Word and He opens our mind to receive what that Word gives. Pray for the Holy Spirit's help every time you read & study the Bible, since you wouldn't have understood anything it says were it not for the Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures to you. (Catechism 3rd article) From the pierced heart of Jesus, as He hung there crucified in hideous-looking glory for you and for the whole world, came the flowing, living water that flooded you with forgiveness, inundated you with peace, soaked you in a refreshing bath of Divine love and God's good favor has washed away all your sins and stains. Though you were once a barren wilderness, thanks to the breath of Jesus, breathed out in the glory of His cross-bound dying gasp, you are a fruitful field abundant with the

Holy Spirit.

Which brings us to the final point, for the Holy Spirit produces a fountain of living water flowing out of your own heart, since you have been joined to Jesus like branches grafted onto the one, true Vine. What does that flowing fountain translate to? What does it look like in your life? What you have freely received from your Lord, so now you freely give. As you have been forgiven, so by the power of the Holy Spirit alone you are empowered to forgive. The kingdom of God comes of itself, even without your prayer, but the Lord has been pleased to use you and your prayers to bring it about anyway. Consider how the Ten Commandments inform your personal daily life and calling, and you'll get an idea of how the Holy Spirit will do His work in the world through a cleansed and renewed you.

Where's the Holy Spirit? Jesus says, Come to Me, drink my living water by believing and trusting in Me. He's wherever you find Jesus giving you life, peace, forgiveness. That's why we know that as Jesus is here with us always to the end of the age, the Holy Spirit is also here with us always just as certainly.

He might not be the life coach or financial advisor that you think you need in order to fulfill your life's desire of the day, but He will lead you to the living water of Christ our Savior, to the eternal blessings of heaven and the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come. Leave it to the Holy Spirit to bring about as true for your life now and forever everything you confess to be true in the Creed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.