

Pentecost Sunday (Sunday May 23, 2026)

This weekend we celebrate Pentecost Sunday, as the birthday of the Church.

Seeing Pentecost this way, we aren't being glib – we speak this way because Pentecost **is the day** that the Church, meaning its members, really and truly comes to life.

Prior to Pentecost, the Apostles and disciples are following the Lord much as many of us do – growing in their prayer lives and deepening their faith.

For forty days, Jesus stays close – teaching, reassuring, explaining things they didn't understand, strengthening their faith.

Then He departs and the Holy Spirit descends and they fully and completely take on the mission Christ began.

At Christmas, God enters the world as an Infant Child, Jesus His only Begotten Son.

During Holy Week, we commemorate Jesus giving His Life for the world.

At Easter, He destroys sin and death for the believer and then He departs the world entrusting that mission to His Apostles and disciples – including us.

But today — the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit and strengthened and sent forth

Friends, all the Apostles (but St. John) died a martyr's death – St. John suffered for the rest of his days but lived to tell others.

Much of the early Christian Church were martyred – and yet this faith of ours was founded on that. On men and women who gave everything they had for the faith they chose to live.

Our Gospel today reminds us that we are all called from behind our fears to share the mission of Christ; our Gospel today reminds us that even the Apostles were not exactly fearless heroes.

We find them locked away hiding when the Holy Spirit comes to them – living in fear – afraid of suffering the same fate as Jesus, fearing rejection, failure, fearing what comes next.

And don't most of us know these fears too?

Aren't there doors that **we lock**, the doors of our own souls locked in fear?

Sometimes it's because we've been hurt or disappointed or uncertain.

Sometimes we hold back because we think we have no more to give and we're tired

Sometimes we fear that we aren't strong enough or we'll disappoint or let people down.

And so, we have to let Jesus open those locked doors of our soul and assure us of His peace and the Holy Spirit's Presence.

Today (yesterday) we finished the last of our confirmations here this year – so, for our students they were marked with the Sacred Chrism, and they heard me offer Jesus Promise: *“Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit”*.

This moment changes everything for us and today is a reminder of that for those of us confirmed in the Spirit: we're expected to live our baptismal call – in fact, the Church needs us to.

Many of you, as parents, are bringing your children to Mass – and that is so important, so much a part of your Christian mission. But then there's more to do, we need to get involved.

Friends, the Church is not born through human strength, and the Church doesn't just happen – it's not the work of others – it's with **our help, our involvement**; the Holy Spirit working through ordinary people like us.

Pentecost **matters** because without the Holy Spirit, the apostles stay behind locked doors, and the Gospel is never spread.

Without the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes just another human organization.

But **with the Holy Spirit**, fearful people become courageous. Self-centered people become generous and broken people become holy – **we are those broken people!**

Ordinary people become saints.

The Holy Spirit isn't simply a symbol or idea but the living presence of God within us.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit strengthen that Presence.

The kids hear me say at confirmation – we must make a distinction between gifts and possessions: gifts are meant to be shared, possessions we keep for ourselves.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit aren't given simply for ourselves but they meant to be shared – and that's the reason this is an important feast for our parish.

Today, we are celebrating and thanking our parish volunteers at our Volunteer Appreciation Social.

And what we celebrate wasn't simply their "helpfulness.", but the Holy Spirit at work in our midst.

Every healthy parish is built upon people who allow the Holy Spirit to work through them: teaching our children, welcoming us at the doors, singing, serving at the altar, visiting the sick, preparing food, organizing and helping at events.

People, many of whom work quietly behind the scenes – that's Pentecost in action.

The Holy Spirit transforms us from sitting on the sidelines to active and engaged members of Christ's work here on earth – and Christianity depends on us...

From "what do I get" to "how can I help?"

Our world desperately needs hopeful, joyful Christians right now – we live in a world/a culture/a society that's often about self-protection, comfort, and isolation.

But the Holy Spirit pushes us outward teaching us that life becomes meaningful when we give ourselves away in love.

In marriage, in family life, in friendship; in priesthood & religious life; in parish life.

When Christians are guided by the Holy Spirit, people take notice.

That's what happened on the first Pentecost and thereafter – the Apostles walked out from behind locked doors and the world began to change.

Not because **they were extraordinary people**, but because they allowed God to work through them.

So perhaps we ask:

- What doors in my life still remain locked?
- What fears are holding me back?
- Where is the Holy Spirit calling me to step forward, serve, trust, forgive, pray, or give more generously of myself?

Friends, the Church was born in fire and may that fire never be extinguished within us.

Come Holy Spirit, enkindle in each of us the fire of Your Divine Love – reignite the flame of faith in us so that we can help You renew the face of the earth.