

The Diversity of the Spirit

Pentecost

May 24, 2026

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One of the welcoming developments in recent times is the dedication of certain months of the year to various under-represented groups. For example, the month of May is 'Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.' These months highlight the struggles and accomplishments of these various groups in an unavoidable and unmistakable way.

This weekend, we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. This feast is like the Church's version of cultural diversity month. Each year around Pentecost, many parishes and dioceses make a big deal about the various cultures present in our universal Catholic Church. Following our scripture readings, we use this as an opportunity to speak various languages, call for renewal, appreciate the different spiritual gifts, overcome our human-made divides, and receive the peace of Risen Christ once again. All of this is good. We need months and feasts like this to break through decades or centuries of silence on these important matters. At the same time, however, 30-day months dedicated to certain groups or 1-day feasts dedicated to diversity are not enough.

We might be surprised to know that there are some people who have months dedicated to them who do not actually want these months forever. This is not because they want to go backward, but because they want to go forward. A dedicated month is just a steppingstone to a fuller and normalized inclusion. Something similar could be said about the diversity of the Holy Spirit.

Kilian McDonnell, a Benedictine priest and theologian, writes about the Holy Spirit. In his book, *The Other Hand of God*, he laments whenever the Holy Spirit is limited to one day a year or treated as if she could only reveal herself after Pentecost. He writes, "Jews and Christians are deprived of their full history if excessive place is given to the Pentecost event as the point of departure..., as though the Spirit then entered history for the first time. Such a truncating imperials the unity of the plan of salvation. Gregory of Nazianzus writes: 'Christ is born; the Spirit is the forerunner.' **The history of the Spirit does not start at Pentecost.**" (60-1) In other words, the Holy Spirit has always been at work with God the Father since before she hovered over the waters at Creation and will continue to be at work as the third person of the Holy Trinity for all eternity.

The diversity of the Holy Spirit celebrated on Pentecost should not be limited to a one-day feast per year.

How do I see the Holy Spirit already at work in the Old Testament preparing the way for Jesus? How can we make sure Pentecost is an ongoing experience in our normal day-to-day life at St. Josephine Bakhita Parish & School?

As we continue with this mass, let us pray that our mission of advancing diverse expressions of the global Catholic Church may foster an ongoing experience of Pentecost and the diversity of the Holy Spirit where people from all over the globe are not just welcome and celebrated one day a year, but throughout the whole year. We pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to broaden our horizons, widen our tents, diversify our body, and give life to all.

On the faithful, who adore
and confess you, evermore
in your sevenfold gift descend;
Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end.
Amen. Alleluia.