

Father, Holy Spirit, Son

Pentecost Sunday (Year C)

June 8, 2025

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When we speak of the Holy Trinity, we say the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This follows our understanding of God's revelation in history. The Father is the Creator from the very beginning, the Son is the Savior who came around 2000 years ago, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier sent after Christ's Ascension on the feast of Pentecost. In truth, however, while the Father is the source, origin, and font of God, the ordering of the importance of the Son and the Holy Spirit are actually interchangeable. That is because the Son and the Holy Spirit are both equally at work in the world. When we make the sign of the cross, we could just as accurately say "in the name of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, and of the Son."

For much of Christian history, because of the Holy Spirit being named last in the Holy Trinity, we have largely ignored or forgotten about it. That is why the feast of Pentecost often feels like an anomaly to Christians. It is the one time a year when we celebrate the liberating spirit, the wild tongues of fire, and the strong winds of change, over the usual focus on following the law, believing in proper doctrine, and maintaining the status quo. But what if

Pentecost was not a one-time event or an outlier in the life of the Church? What if the Holy Spirit was not just the last person of the Holy Trinity, but as active and as talked about as the Son? What if Jesus Christ himself was following the Holy Spirit's lead in his ministry and life?

Perhaps the biggest hesitancy many of us have about accepting the Holy Spirit as fully equal to the Son revolves around the fact that the Holy Spirit is by definition uncontrollable. As humans, giving up control is hard. While we must certainly do our part as responsible members of the Church and society, we cannot make ourselves the central reference point or driving force for the functioning of our world. There is a much broader spirit at work, a spirit that was present at the dawn of creation long before any of us arrived on this earth. This same spirit breathes life into every living being in every generation. This very spirit will outlast all of us and be present until the end of the age. For us Christians, this is none other than the Holy Spirit.

When Pope Francis was still alive, the archbishop of Newark, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, wrote to him about a sensitive matter he was trying to figure out in his archdiocese. He received a short handwritten note back from Pope Francis that started with, "Tobin, you and I are simply altar servers of the Holy Spirit." Like Altar Servers at mass, all of us are here to assist the working of the Holy Spirit, who is the main presider and the main protagonist of history.

Pentecost is an ongoing experience in the Church because the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are both equally active in the world.

In what areas of my life am I having trouble letting go of control? How can I be more intentional about praying in and with the Holy Spirit as much as I pray to and through Jesus?

As we continue with this Pentecost mass, let us pray that we may be immersed in the life of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son. Parishioners and visitors of St. Josephine Bakhita, you and I are simply altar servers of the Holy Spirit.