

**THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST
& THE EIGHTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME - A
May 24 – 30, 2026**

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Sunday

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

A Reflection from the Commentary by St. Augustine

The happy day has dawned for us on which Holy Church makes her first radiant appearance to the eyes of faith and sets the hearts of believers on fire. It is the day on which we celebrate the sending of the Holy Spirit by our Lord Jesus Christ, after he had risen from the dead and ascended into glory. In the gospel, it is written: *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water shall flow from his heart.* The Evangelist explains these words by adding: *Jesus said this about the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.* Now the glorification of Jesus took place when he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, but all was not yet accomplished. The Holy Spirit still had to be given; the one who made the promise had to send him. This is precisely what occurred at Pentecost.

After being in the company of his disciples for the forty days following his resurrection, the Lord ascended into heaven, and on the fiftieth day – the day we are now celebrating – he sent the Holy Spirit. The account is given in Scripture: *Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and there appeared to them tongues like fire which separated and came to rest on each one of them. And they began to speak in other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gave them power of utterance.* That wind cleansed the disciples' hearts, blowing away fleshly thoughts like so much chaff. The fire burnt up their unregenerate desires as if they were straw. The tongues in which they spoke as the Holy Spirit filled them were a foreshadowing of the Church's preaching of the Gospel in the tongues of all nations.

After the flood, in pride and defiance of the Lord, an impious generation erected a high tower and so brought about the division of the human race into many language groups, each with its own peculiar speech which was unintelligible to the rest of the world. At Pentecost, by contrast, the humble piety of believers brought all these diverse languages into the unity of the Church. What discord had scattered, love was to gather together. Like the limbs of a single body, the separated members of the human race would be restored to unity by being joined to Christ, their common head, and welded into the oneness of a holy body by the fire of love. Anyone, therefore, who rejects the gift of peace and withdraws from the fellowship of this unity cuts himself off from the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So then, my fellow members of Christ's body, you are the fruits of unity and the children of peace. Keep this day with joy, celebrate it in freedom of spirit, for in you is fulfilled what was foreshadowed in those days when the Holy Spirit came. At that time, whoever received the Holy Spirit spoke in many languages, individual though he was. Now in the same way, unity itself speaks through all nations in every tongue. If you yourselves are established in that unity, you have the Holy Spirit among you, and nothing can separate you from the Church of Christ, which speaks in the language of every nation of the world.

Monday

MARY'S EDUCATION AS MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

A Reflection from the writing of Hans Urs Von Balthasar

At first, it was the Mother who introduced the Son into the Old Covenant and thereby trained him for his messianic office. However, it was not she but his own knowledge of the Father's mission in the Holy Spirit that showed him who he was and what he had to do. The relationship is thus reversed: from now on it is the Son who educates the Mother for the greatness of his task, cultivating in her the maturity she needs to stand under the Cross and, finally, to receive, at prayer within the Church, the universal gift of the Holy Spirit.

From the very outset, this education reflects Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce the Mother's soul. It is a pitiless process. All the episodes handed down for us are more or less brusque rejections. It is not as though Jesus had been disobedient for thirty years; we have an explicit affirmation to the contrary. However, the merely physical relationship to which faith was so intimately tied in the Old Testament is sovereignly, ruthlessly forced open. Henceforth faith in Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, is the only thing that counts...

The scene in which Jesus, teaching those gathered around him in a certain house, refuses to receive the visit of his Mother, who is standing outside, seems almost unbearable to us. "Here are my mother and my brethren! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother". Jesus means her more than anyone, though he does not mention her by name. Yet who understands his meaning? Did Mary herself understand it? We have to accompany Mary in spirit as she makes her way home and try to imagine her state of mind. The sword gnaws at her soul; she feels as if bereft of her inmost self, as if the point of her life has been drained away. Her faith, which at the beginning received so many sensible confirmations, is plunged into a dark night. It is as if the Son, who sends her no news about what he is doing, has run away from her, yet she cannot simply let him go away: she has to accompany him, full of dread, in her night of faith...

The purpose of this constant training in the naked faith Mary will need under the Cross is often insufficiently understood; people are astonished and embarrassed by the way in which Jesus treats his Mother, whom he addresses both in Cana and at the Cross only as "woman". He himself is the first one to wield the sword that must pierce her. But how else would she have become ready to stand by the Cross, where not only her Son's earthly failure, but also his abandonment by the God who sends him is revealed. She must finally say Yes to this, too, because she consented a priori to her child's whole destiny. And as if to fill her bitter chalice to the brim, the dying Son expressly abandons his Mother, withdrawing from her and foisting on her another son: "Woman, behold, your son". This gesture is usually understood primarily as evidencing Jesus' concern about where his Mother will live after he is gone... This must not, however, lead us to overlook a second motif: just as the Son is abandoned by the Father, so, too, he abandons his Mother, so that the two of them may be united in a common abandonment. Only thus does she become inwardly ready to take on ecclesial motherhood toward all of Jesus' new brothers and sisters.

Tuesday

CONCERNING THE AIM OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Conversation of St. Seraphim of Sarov with Nicholas Motovilov

“The Lord has revealed to me,” began the great elder, “that in your childhood you longed to know the aim of our Christian life and continually asked questions about it of many and great ecclesiastical dignitaries.” “But no one,” continued Father Seraphim, “has given you a precise answer... Prayer, fasting, watching, and all other Christian acts, however good they may be, do not alone constitute the aim of our Christian life, although they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this aim. The true aim of our Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit of God. “How do you mean acquire?” I asked Father Seraphim. “To acquire is the same as to gain,” he answered. “You understand what acquiring money means. Acquiring God’s Spirit, it’s all the same... Acquire, my son, the grace of the Holy Spirit by all the other virtues in Christ; trade in those that are most profitable to you. Thus, if prayer and watching give you more of God’s grace, pray and watch; if fasting give much of God’s Spirit, fast; if almsgiving gives more, give alms. In such manner, decide about every virtue in Christ...”

We have become very inattentive to the work of our salvation, whence it comes about that many other words also in the Holy Scriptures we do not take in the proper sense; and all because we do not seek the grace of God, because in the pride of our minds we do not allow it to enter our souls, and therefore we have no true enlightenment from the Lord, which is sent into the hearts of men, to all who hunger and thirst in heart for God’s truth.

When our Lord Jesus Christ had accomplished the whole work of salvation, after His resurrection, He breathed on the Apostles to restore the breath of life which had been lost by Adam, and gave them that same grace of the Holy Spirit of God which had been Adam’s. On the day of Pentecost, He triumphantly sent down on them the Holy Spirit in the rushing of a mighty wind like tongues of fire, which sat upon each one of them and entered in and filled them with the strength of Divine flame-like grace; whose breath is laden with dew, and it creates joy in the souls partaking of its power and influence. And, when this same fire-inspired grace of the Holy Spirit is given to all the faithful in Christ in the sacrament of Holy Baptism, they seal it in the chief places appointed by the Holy Church on our flesh, as the eternal vessel of this grace. If we were never to sin after our baptism, we should remain forever holy, spotless, exempt from all foulness of flesh and spirit, like the saints of God. But the trouble is that, though we increase in stature, we do not increase in the grace and mind of God, as our Lord Jesus Christ increased; but on the contrary, growing dissipated bit by bit, we are deprived of the grace of God’s Holy Spirit and become sinners of many degrees and many sins.

But, when a man, stirred by the Divine Wisdom which seeks our salvation, is resolved for her sake to rise early before God and keep watch for the attainment of his eternal salvation, then must he in obedience to her voice hasten to repent truly of all his sins and to perfect the virtues that are their contrary, and thus by virtuous acts done for Christ’s sake to acquire the Holy Spirit, which works in us and sets up in us the kingdom of God. Notwithstanding man’s repeated falls, notwithstanding the darkness around the soul, the grace of the Holy Spirit... shines still in the heart with the Divine immemorial light of the precious merits of Christ. When the sinner turns to the way of repentance, this Christ-Light smooths out all trace of past sin and clothes the former sinner once more in a robe of incorruption woven from the grace of the Holy Spirit...

Wednesday

ST. AUGUSTINE, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

A Reflection from the Writings of Alban Butler

When Pope St. Gregory the Great decided that the time had come for the evangelization of Anglo-Saxon England, he chose as missionaries some thirty or more monks from his monastery of St. Andrew... As their leader, he gave them their own prior, Augustine. The party set out from Rome in the year 596, but no sooner had they arrived in Provence than they were assailed with warnings about the ferocity of the Anglo-Saxons and the dangers of the Channel. Greatly discouraged, they persuaded Augustine to return to Rome and obtain leave to abandon the enterprise. St. Gregory, however, had received definite assurance that the English were well disposed towards the Christian faith; he therefore sent Augustine back to his brethren with words of encouragement which gave them heart to proceed on their way.

They landed on the Isle of Thanet in the territory of Ethelbert, king of Kent, who was baptized at Pentecost 597. Almost immediately afterwards, St. Augustine paid a visit to France, where he was consecrated bishop of the English by St. Virgilius, metropolitan of Arles. At Christmas of that same year, many of Ethelbert's subjects were baptized, as St. Gregory joyfully related in a letter to Eulogius, the patriarch of Alexandria. Augustine sent two of his monks, Laurence and Peter, to Rome to give a full report of his mission, to ask for more helpers, and obtain advice on various points. They came back bringing the pallium for Augustine and accompanied by a fresh band of missionaries, amongst whom were St. Mellitus, St. Justus, and St. Paulinus.

Gregory outlined for Augustine the course he should take to develop a hierarchy for the whole country, and both to him and to Mellitus gave very practical instructions on other points. Pagan temples were not to be destroyed, but were to be purified and consecrated for Christian worship. Local customs, were as far as possible retained, days of dedication and feasts of martyrs being substituted for heathen festivals. In Canterbury itself, St. Augustine rebuilt an ancient church which, with an old wooden house, formed the nucleus for his metropolitan basilica and for the later monastery of Christ Church. These buildings stood on the site of the present cathedral, begun by Lanfranc in 1070. Outside the walls of Canterbury, he made a monastic foundation, which he dedicated in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul. After his death, this abbey became known as St. Augustine's and was the burial place of the early archbishops.

Cut off from much communication with the outside world, the British church clung to certain usages at variance with those of the Roman tradition. St. Augustine invited the leading ecclesiastics to meet him at some place just on the confines of Wessex, still known in Bede's day as Augustine's Oak. There, he urged them to comply with the practices of the rest of Western Christendom, and more especially to co-operate with him in evangelizing the Anglo-Saxons. Fidelity to their local traditions, however, made them unwilling. A second conference proved a failure. Because St. Augustine failed to rise when they arrived, the British bishops decided that he was lacking in humility and would neither listen to him nor acknowledge him as their metropolitan. The saint's last years were spent in spreading and consolidating the faith throughout Ethelbert's realm, and episcopal sees were established at London and Rochester. About seven years after he arrived in England, St. Augustine passed to his reward on May 26, 605.

Thursday

ACCEPTING THE GIFT THAT IS COMMUNITY

A Reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

Community is a gift. It isn't founded on our collaborative efforts, nor on our sincere desire for friendship. These things are important and must be kept in mind, but 'being together', as it is called in the New Testament, is a gift from God. It is a participation in the 'being together' that we call the Trinity. We find the model of this in Jesus being together with his disciples. God shares this Trinitarian community with the Church, and in the Church, each how to share in this community experience. We are not only together with other now-living members of Christ but with those who have left this world and entered that of God's Kingdom of everlasting life. As long as we are joined in Christ, we are together with one another. This means that we are helping and being helped by all who are together in this way. By accepting the Word of God, we become members of an authentic community in Christ, living according to the laws of Trinitarian fellowship; i.e., of mutual love.

Lived Christian fellowship begins in the heart. It is from within that intentions come and from them come acts of love, or their opposite. The failure of love and the dominance of evil intentions are what cause division and all that results. But we know that people bound in fellowship with us in Christ are animated by love, a love like Christ's that fills hearts. Those who are already with God are filled with love for us; it is inseparable from their love for God. Are we mindful of their love? Are we always aware, in some way, that we are loved actively and without hesitation by the many who have gone before us, especially those we knew and were joined with in fellowship already upon this earth? A description of a community based on charity is given to us in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. We are told this charity lives on God's word, as ordinary life depends on breathing. The Word of God, not just the Scriptures but Christ, dwells all around us and within us. A Christian community finds in this its Bread of Life. This bread is an indispensable food for the community.

Listen to St. Ambrose: "When I read the Divine Scriptures, God returns to walk in the earthly paradise. Christ and Divine Scripture are the remedy for every distasteful thing and the only refuge from temptation." What is temptation but the pull of something or someone other than God, hinting that it can free us from whatever is bothering or worrying us at present? But that is a lie. We turn to God and to God's Word, and we do this not simply on our own but by the help of others, itself given us in love and as a sign of love. We remember those who have gone before us, and we remember how they persevered to the end in clinging to God and God's promises, especially by recalling Scripture passages to their mind and praying with them. To think of these friends is to be drawn to God and to God's promises. What more do we need than this gift of grace? In it, we are actively united around God and in love. This is part of God's gift of community.

Friday

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE EVANGELISTS

A Reflection from Evangelii Nuntiandi by St. Pope Paul VI

Only after the descent of the Spirit did the apostles set out for the ends of the earth to begin the great task of evangelizing. This was interpreted by St. Peter as a fulfillment of a prophecy by Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh". Peter had been empowered by the Spirit to proclaim publicly that Jesus is the Son of God. In the same way, Paul was filled with the Spirit before he embarked on his ministry. Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, was chosen for ministry and later bore witness by his own blood. The Spirit fell upon all who accepted God's word.

The Church grows by being filled with the consoling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the principle of its life. The Spirit enables believers to understand the mystery of Christ and his teaching. As the Spirit was active in the initial stages of the Church, so it is now at work in each and every person who proclaims the gospel message and is open to its guidance. The Spirit disposes the hearts of hearers to accept this message.

There are many techniques for evangelizing, but even the best is no substitute for the hidden working of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, no amount of study or preparation is of any avail. The clearest reasoning is powerless to persuade the human heart, unless the Spirit prompts it. It doesn't matter what science or discipline one argues from; only the power of the Spirit produces results.

That the present time is a privileged moment of the Spirit for the Church is a fact we are very conscious of today. Everywhere believers seek to understand the Spirit revealed in the Scriptures. Unfurling their sails to catch the Spirit's breath, many gladly entrust themselves to the Spirit's guidance. People gather together in large numbers to pray and give themselves as agents of the Spirit. The influence of the Spirit is paramount. It was no mere chance that the first steps in preaching the gospel were taken on Pentecost.

All this makes it easy to see that the initiative of spreading the Gospel comes from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prompts the proclamation and opens the hearts of hearers to understand and accept the word of salvation. The Spirit can even be called the goal of evangelization. That is because the Spirit brings the New Creation into being. The Spirit alone fashions the New Humanity that all evangelization aims at – that unity in diversity which the Gospel necessarily calls forth. It is due to the Spirit that the gospel message permeates the world. The Spirit alone enables evangelists to read the God-given signs of the times and explain their concrete significance in given circumstances. We are all called to participate in this great endeavor; we have all received the Spirit. Let the Spirit guide you to recognize how to do your part! If you can love as Christ loves, then you can be a Spirit-guided evangelist, whatever your life may be like.

Saturday

LEARNING NEVER TO GIVE UP ON ANYONE **A Reflection from a Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny**

Of all the human weaknesses that God has borne for us, I think the greatest was also the first in time – it was that God lay concealed in the Virgin's womb for nine months. A majesty that knows no bounds was so deeply humble as to remain silent and hidden like this for such a long time. Divine Wisdom says nothing, and Divine Power works nothing, and these realities' presence is not betrayed by any visible sign. God was not seen in such weakness even on the Cross. There, what seemed weak was seen to be strong beyond imagining when he blessed with paradise the thief dying with him, and when his last breath drew a centurion to confess him as Son of God. But in the womb, it is as if he did not exist. The Eternal Word constrained itself to be utterly silent. To us who have faith, the silence of the Word cries out. It calls us too to take up the discipline of silence. This nourishes, forms, and strengthens the human spirit in a marvelous inner growth which is more wholesome for being more hidden. If this were not true, Solomon would not have said: "Like an open city without any encompassing walls, so is the person who can't restrain the tongue from speaking".

Consider now the meal in which we are partaking. We are to eat the one who is the Bread of Life, the Bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Every word that comes forth from the mouth of God is the Bread of Life, the Only-Begotten Son. And he comes forth from a virgin's womb, from one silence into the silence of a loving heart which receives him wholly and willingly. If you are wise, your occupation will be to eat this bread in the presence of the Lord God, preserving like Mary all you hear from or about God and pondering it in your heart. We have been made members of Christ's Body and, precisely as that Body, we eat Christ's Body as the Bread of our lives. Grace is not lessened by use. So the more you eat, the more this food will abound for you.

Recall what Scripture tells us about Rebecca when she was carrying both Jacob and Esau in her womb. It is a great lesson that the Word of God gives us as we eat him and ponder on what he has done by giving us the sign of a virgin who conceived. The two children seemed to Rebecca to be struggling in her womb, and she found this very painful. She almost wished that she had not conceived them. Now Mary's womb foreshadows that which is the Church and in whose womb there are the good and well-behaved, plus the ill-tempered and undisciplined.

All are called into the Body of Christ. Do the ill-disciplined and ill-tempered annoy you so that you wish they had not been brought to term? But God can soften stony hearts to make them the hearts of children of Abraham. God softens the heart of the Church, and your own heart, so that the ache felt is born as long as it takes to reform the two into one Christ-likeness. Those God has called are never cast away. Never despair of others, or of yourself. God will continue to work until all are beloved children of the Heavenly Father. Do not grow weary of bearing with those who cause you pain. Love them as our Heavenly Father and pray that God, and Mary, mother of all who are in Christ, will lead them to the joy of God's heavenly banquet. Pray and love and trust in God, always.