



# The Holy See

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## SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

### **HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS**

*St Peter's Basilica  
Sunday, 28 May 2023*

**[Multimedia]**

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Today the word of God shows us the Holy Spirit in action. We see him acting in three ways: *in the world he created, in the Church, and in our hearts*.

1. First, *in the world he created*, in creation. From the beginning, the Holy Spirit was at work. We prayed with the Psalm (104:30): “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created”. He is in fact the *Creator Spiritus* (cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE, *In Ps. XXXII*, 2.2), the Creator Spirit: for centuries the Church has invoked him as such. Yet we can ask ourselves: What does the Spirit do in the creation of the world? If everything has its origin from the Father, and if everything is created through the Son, what is the specific role of the Spirit? One great Father of the Church, Saint Basil, wrote: “if you attempt to remove the Spirit from creation, all things become confused and their life appears unruly and lacking order” (*De Sancto Spiritu*, XVI, 38). That is the role of the Spirit: at the beginning and at all times, he makes created realities pass from disorder to order, from dispersion to cohesion, from confusion to harmony. We will always see this way of acting in the Church’s life. In a word, he gives *harmony* to the world; in this way, he “directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26; *Ps* 104:30). He does renew the earth, but listen carefully: He does this not by changing reality, but rather by harmonizing it. That is his “style”, because in himself he is harmony: *ipse harmonia est* (cf. SAINT BASIL, *In Ps. XXIX*, 1).

In our world today, there is so much discord, such great division. We are all “connected”, yet find

ourselves disconnected from one another, anesthetized by indifference and overwhelmed by solitude. So many wars, so many conflicts: it seems incredible the evil of which we are capable! Yet in fact, fueling our hostilities is the spirit of division, the devil, whose very name means “divider”. Yes, preceding and exceeding our own evil, our own divisions, there is the evil spirit who is “the deceiver of the whole world” (*Rev 12:9*). He rejoices in conflict, injustice, slander; that is his joy. To counter the evil of discord, our efforts to create harmony are not sufficient. Hence, the Lord, at the culmination of his Passover from death to life, at the culmination of salvation, pours out upon the created world his good Spirit: the Holy Spirit, who opposes the spirit of division because he is harmony, the Spirit of unity, the bringer of peace. Let us invoke the Spirit daily upon our whole world, upon our lives and upon any kind of division!

2. Along with his work in creation, we see the Holy Spirit at work *in the Church*, beginning with the day of Pentecost. We notice, however, that the Spirit does not inaugurate the Church by providing the community with rules and regulations, but by descending upon each of the apostles: every one of them receives particular graces and different charisms. Such an abundance of differing gifts could generate confusion, but, as in creation, the Holy Spirit loves to create harmony out of diversity. The harmony of the Spirit is not a mandatory, uniform order; in the Church, there is indeed an order, but it is “structured *in accordance with the diversity of the Spirit’s gifts*” (SAINT BASIL, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XVI, 39). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends in tongues of fire: he bestows upon each person the ability to speak other languages (cf. *Acts 2:4*) and to understand in his or her own language what is spoken by others (cf. *Acts 2:6.11*). In a word, the Spirit does not create a single language, one that is the same for all. He does not eliminate differences or cultures, but harmonizes everything without reducing them to bland uniformity. And this must make us stop and reflect at this current time, when the temptation of “back-stepping” seeks to homogenise everything into merely apparent disciplines lacking any substance. Let us think about this: the Spirit does not begin with a clearly outlined programme, as we would, who so often become caught up in our plans and projects. No, he begins by bestowing gratuitous and superabundant gifts. Indeed, on that day of Pentecost, as the Scripture emphasizes, “*all were filled with the Holy Spirit*” (*Acts 2:4*). *All were filled*: that is how the life of the Church began, not from a precise and detailed plan, but from the shared experience of God’s love. That is how the Spirit creates harmony; he invites us to experience amazement at his love and at his gifts present in others. As Saint Paul tells us: “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit... For in the one Spirit we were all baptized *into one body*” (*1 Cor 12:4.13*). To see each of our brothers and sisters in the faith as part of the same body of which I am a member: this is the harmonious approach of the Spirit, this is the path that he points out to us!

And the Synod now taking place is – and should be – *a journey in accordance with the Spirit*, not a Parliament for demanding rights and claiming needs in accordance with the agenda of the world, nor an occasion for following wherever the wind is blowing, but the opportunity to be docile to the breath of the Spirit. For on the sea of history, the Church sets sail only with him, for he is “the soul of the Church” (SAINT PAUL VI, *Address to the Sacred College*, 21 June 1976), the heart of

synodality, the driving force of evangelization. Without him, the Church is lifeless, faith is mere doctrine, morality mere duty, pastoral work mere toil. Sometimes we hear so-called thinkers or theologians, who suggest seemingly mathematical theories that leave us cold because they lack the Spirit within. With the Spirit, on the other hand, faith is life, the love of the Lord convinces us, and hope is reborn. Let us put the Holy Spirit back at the centre of the Church; otherwise, our hearts will not be consumed by love for Jesus, but by love for ourselves. Let us put the Spirit at the start and heart of the Synod's work. For "it is he above all whom the Church needs today! Let us say to him each day: Come!" (cf. ID., *General Audience*, 29 November 1972). And let us journey together because, as at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit loves to descend when "all come together" (cf. *Acts* 2:1). Yes, to manifest himself to the world, he chose the time and place where *all were gathered together*. The People of God, in order to be filled with the Spirit, must therefore journey together, "do Synod". That is how harmony in the Church is renewed: by journeying together with the Spirit at the centre. Brothers and sister, let us build harmony in the Church!

3. Finally, the Holy Spirit creates harmony *in our hearts*. We see this in the Gospel, where Jesus, on the evening of Easter, breathes upon the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Jn* 20:22). He bestows the Spirit for a precise purpose: to forgive sins, to reconcile minds and to *harmonize hearts* wounded by evil, broken by hurts, led astray by feelings of guilt. Only the Spirit restores harmony in the heart, for he is the one who creates "intimacy with God" (SAINT BASIL, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XIX, 49). If we want harmony let us seek him, not worldly substitutes. Let us invoke the Holy Spirit each day. Let us begin our day by praying to him. Let us become docile to him!

And today, on his feast, let us ask ourselves: Am I docile to the harmony of the Spirit? Or do I pursue my projects, my own ideas, without letting myself be shaped and changed by him? Is my way of living the faith docile to the Spirit or is it obstinate? Am I stubbornly attached to texts or so-called doctrines that are only cold expressions of life? Am I quick to judge? Do I point fingers and slam doors in the face of others, considering myself a victim of everyone and everything? Or do I welcome the Spirit's harmonious and creative power, the "grace of wholeness" that he inspires, his forgiveness that brings us peace? And in turn, do I forgive? Forgiveness is making room for the Spirit to come. Do I foster reconciliation and build communion, or am I always on the lookout, poking my nose into problems and causing hurt, spite, division and breakdown? Do I forgive, promote reconciliation and build communion? If the world is divided, if the Church is polarized, if hearts are broken, let us not waste time in criticizing others and growing angry with one another; instead, let us invoke the Spirit. He is able to resolve all of this.

Holy Spirit, Spirit of Jesus and of the Father, inexhaustible wellspring of harmony, to you we entrust the world; to you we consecrate the Church and our hearts. Come, Creator Spirit, harmony of humanity, renew the face of the earth. Come, Gift of gifts, harmony of the Church, make us one in you. Come, Spirit of forgiveness and harmony of the heart, transform us as only you can, through the intercession of Mary.

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