

The Festival of Pentecost – Pr. Faugstad exordium & sermon  
St. John 14:23-31: “The Holy Spirit Puts Love and Peace in Our Hearts.”  
May 23/24, 2026 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

### In Nomine Iesu

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The Christian Church has a Holy Spirit problem. This is no fault of the Holy Spirit; it is the fault of sinners who want to shape and fashion the Spirit in ways that suit their own sinful ideas.

The liberal Christians say the Holy Spirit is feminine as a balance to the “masculine” Father and Son. They also claim the Spirit is leading them to new revelations and new teachings which often directly contradict what the Bible says. You can be certain to find these errors in churches flying rainbow-colored flags which state, “The Spirit is still speaking.”

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians expect to receive the Holy Spirit apart from the Bible. They wait for the Spirit to move them, to “put something on their heart” to do, or to give them special messages and insights. If they are particularly attuned to the Spirit, they expect to be able to speak in heavenly languages or have special gifts like the ability to heal.

Many Christians today fall into these traps. They look for the Spirit outside the Word. They judge if the Spirit is present by how they feel, and they trust that feeling to guide them in decision-making and planning for the future.

But none of these things is promised in the Word of God. Looking for the Spirit apart from the Word and Sacraments can only result in confusion and chaos. The Holy Spirit is not working to bring new teachings to the Church. He is not leading people away from the written Word. He is not trying to guide us through our feelings.

Jesus said: “*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak.... He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you*” (Joh. 16:13,14). The Holy Spirit leads sinners to salvation and faith in Christ through God’s holy Word.

That’s what He was sent to do on Pentecost. His coming did not create confusion and chaos. It brought clarity and order. He gave the disciples the ability to speak the Gospel message in real languages for the salvation of many souls. About three thousand people believed and were baptized that day, the beginning of the New Testament Church (Act. 2:41).

The message of the Church has not changed, and neither has the work of the Holy Spirit. He continues to glorify the Father and the Son by bringing the truth of God to sinners through the proclamation of the Word.

In celebration of the Holy Spirit’s work among us, we stand to sing our festival hymn, #399, “O Light of God’s Most Wondrous Love”:

O Light of God’s most wondrous love,

Who dost our darkness brighten,  
Shed on Thy Church from heav'n above,  
Our eye of faith enlighten!  
As in Thy light we gather here,  
Show us that Christ's own promise clear  
Is Yea and Amen ever.  
O risen and ascended Lord,  
We wait fulfillment of Thy Word;  
O bless us with Thy favor!

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*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is written in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. / "These things I have spoken while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid. / "You have heard Me say to you: 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here."  
(NKJV)

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who kept His promise to send the Holy Spirit after His ascension, so we would be guided into the soul-saving truth of God, dear fellow redeemed:

The summary of God's Ten Commandments is love—love for God and love for neighbor. We want to keep those Commandments; we want to have love and show love like God wants us to. But other things besides love—negative things—compete for space in our hearts. Anger tries to push its way in, along with bitterness and hatred, pride and selfishness, and the desire to get revenge. Our sinful flesh thinks of reasons why we are not required to show love, or why certain people don't deserve our love. And love gets crowded out.

The same thing can happen with peace. We all want peace in our hearts, the peace of knowing we are created by God, redeemed by God, and loved by God as His own children. But doubts creep in, along with sadness, worry, guilt, and pain. We do not feel content, that we are where

we are supposed to be, or that we are doing what we are supposed to do. Which way should we turn? How can we find our place and finally be at peace?

These are common struggles for the Christian. The answer is not to try harder to fill our hearts with love or to reach a point of peace. Love and peace do not come from our own efforts; they are gifts of God the Holy Spirit. The way He gives these gifts is through the holy Word of our Lord. Jesus says in today's reading, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word."* The word "keep" means to pay attention to and hold onto the Word, to recognize that it is the source of our faith and life.

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit whom the Father would send in His name, *"He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."* The Holy Spirit works through the Word. St. Paul wrote in his First Letter to the Thessalonians, *"And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers"* (2:13). The Holy Spirit is working through the Word to strengthen our faith in Jesus, which also increases our love and peace.

The more we learn about God's love for us, the more we love Him. And the more we love Him, the more we will want to please Him and honor Him by loving the people around us. In our Catechism workbook, the students and I always have a good discussion about this True/False statement: "More important than being in church on Sunday is living a moral life." Is that True or False? It is False for two main reasons. First of all, living a moral life does not save anyone, unless we have lived a perfect life (which we haven't). Second, church is where we are connected to our Lord's means of grace, which are the fuel source for the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is at work through Word and Sacrament to get rid of the things in our heart that contend against love and peace. When we are feeling angry or bitter about wrongs done against us, He shows us the love of God the Father for the world of sinners that rejected Him, love that caused Him to send His only-begotten Son (Joh. 3:16). He shows us Jesus willingly going to the cross though He had never sinned, carrying all our sins and shedding His blood to wash them all away. How can we hold grudges and dwell on the sins of others when our perfect Lord offered up His holy life in our place?

For our sadness, worry, and guilt, the Holy Spirit opens our ears to hear the absolution of Jesus, that our sins are all forgiven, and He opens our mouths to receive His body and blood for the remission of our sins. God's forgiveness brings peace to our hearts, the peace of knowing that we are right with God because of the saving work of Jesus. Some Christians look at the Bible as information only that we have to do something with. So they contend that the power is not in the Word, the power is in us. But that is not right. The Holy Spirit brings us the gifts that God's Word declares.

For every promise of God, the Holy Spirit tacks on the all-important words: "for you." Jesus lived a perfect life *for you*. Jesus died on the cross *for you*. Jesus rose again *for you*. Jesus is present now, giving His holy body and blood *for you* for the remission of sins. God wants you and every sinner to know and believe these things, and the Holy Spirit makes the connection through the Word from God's heart to yours.

By His powerful activity through Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit changes hearts and keeps changing hearts. We heard how many were converted on that Pentecost Sunday when some three thousand believed and were baptized. Immediately after this, we are told that *“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”* (Act. 2:42). In other words, they showed their love for God by keeping, holding tightly to, His Word. They also showed love to their neighbors: *“they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need”* (v. 45).

These are the fruits the Holy Spirit produced in them and through them. And He is doing the same work among us today. Imagine how our abilities would be wasted and our time and our possessions if all we cared about was ourselves, if the Holy Spirit did not change our hearts and sanctify us through the Word. Now we see that life is so much more than what I want or what I can get or what I can do. It is about what God calls us to do, what He gives to us, and what He has planned for us.

His love for us brings love to our hearts and joy and peace. St. Paul lists these as the first three *“fruits of the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:22). If the Holy Spirit did not put these things in us, we would not have them. We might experience for a time a worldly love, a worldly joy, and a worldly peace, but because they are all from the world, they are corrupted and cannot last. Only the fruits of the Holy Spirit can and will endure because they are the perfect gifts of God.

This is why the Holy Spirit was sent upon the disciples after Jesus’ ascension—to give you the gifts of God. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid.”* He said this because He knew He would complete the work for man’s salvation, making peace between God and sinners. He also knew He would return to the Father in triumph, and that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon His followers to guide them into all truth.

This is what the Holy Spirit still does today. **He Puts Love and Peace in Our Hearts.** He put these gifts in our hearts on our Baptism day, and He continues to put them in our hearts through the proclamation of the Word and the distribution of the Sacraments. These powerful means move us to love God and our neighbor, and they bring us *“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”* (Phi. 4:7).

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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