

## **Day of Pentecost**

**May 24, 2026 • 10:30am**

**Trinity Episcopal Church • New Orleans, LA**

### **The Rev. John M. Pitzer**

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, amen. You may be seated. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

I'm gonna begin this morning by telling you a story of when I was teaching second grade. Many of you, most of you know, that was a small part of my journey. And it's not unusual for my close friends or anyone who has gotten to know me to ask the question, how in the world did you teach second grade? If you've been with me behind the wheel of a car, or if you've been with me in a certain situation when you say, well, he didn't have much patience.

He taught what grade? So I'm gonna tell you a little story about how I kept my second graders in line. Now, I don't know if they do this today, but 30 years ago they did. I learned a lot from my first teachers, the teachers that I worked with.

And this is how we dealt with young children that were not behaving in class, normally the boys. I gotta say, not that seven-year-old girls don't misbehave, but seven-year-old boys can be a bit of a challenge. So if someone was in trouble, they would have to write their name on the board.

It was like a section of the blackboard and they would write their name. If they got in trouble again, which was a pretty big deal, they would have to put a small check next to their name. And that meant, if you had a check next to your name, that meant no recess.

Now, and you had to sit on the bench with the teachers. You couldn't say anything. And for a seven-year-old boy, missing recess is really a big, big, big, big, big deal.

So I had this one, I taught in San Antonio, very much of a Latin community. I'll never forget little Tomas. Tomas Garcia, I have no idea what little Tomas is doing today, I'm sure he's very successful.

But he was one of my handfuls. And at the beginning of the school year, it was not unusual for him to get his name on the board. That's a warning.

And the first time he got the check and he missed recess. So the next time he got his name on the board and the check, he looked at me and he said, what happens if I get another check? And I said, well, you'll just have to find out. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

So he did something, I have no clue what it was. And I said, Tomas, put a check next to your name. There was already a check up there.

All the seven-year-olds are so funny. They're all doing seat work or whatever. And I said, Tomas, put another check up there.

They all do this. Because they do. So he walks over and instead of putting a little check next to his name, he took the chalk and he went, across the board.

And all the seven-year-olds in the class went, and I said, Tomas, into the hallway. Walked out, I'm gonna have to get up here so you can see what I did. Tomas is standing right here.

I get down on my knees and we are face to face. And I said, young man, don't move. Sit on your bottom and don't move.

Don't play with anything. Don't crawl anywhere. Don't pull anything out of your pocket.

Do not speak to anyone unless a teacher walks by or the principal, who was a Catholic nun. You can answer if they ask you why you were there, but I don't want you to say a word. I'll see you in 30 minutes.

He came to me the next day. He said, Mr. Pitzer. I said, yes, Tomas.

I don't like it when you send me into the hallway. And I wanted to say, oh, Tomas, I love it. But I didn't.

I simply said, Tomas, this is all up to you. If you don't wanna get sent into the hallway, you know exactly what you have to do. I have thought about Tomas on several occasions and I might have traumatized him as a child.

Even though he didn't mean a brick to me, he really did. But I started thinking about any time as children, if we have any memory of being sent, it's probably not a very positive memory. If you're, especially when you're a kid, if you're caught cutting in line, what happens? If you're caught, you go to the back of the line.

On numerous occasions when I was growing up, things weren't going well at the dinner table and Johnny got sent to his room. Or if you're a member of a Cleveland League baseball or soccer, if you don't show up with your uniform or maybe your glove, what happens? You're either sent to the bench or maybe you're, maybe, just maybe, you're sent home. So I can see why all of us might have been traumatized as children of what it means to be sent.

Now I want to fast forward just a little bit to 2,000 years ago when Jesus says to his followers, as the Father has sent me, so I send you. I'm not going to stand here and suggest to you that the followers of Jesus were traumatized as children because I don't know how they grew up. Obviously very different than the way we grew up.

But I am going to suggest to you that they were probably traumatized by what happened. Here's why. As each individual was called to be a follower of Jesus, witnessed all the things that we hear every Sunday, all the different miracles. Let me just offer you a couple as examples.

Think about the feeding of the, scripture says the feeding of the 5,000. We all know that it was probably a few pieces of bread and a few pieces of fish. Jesus blessed it and everybody had their fill.

And they witnessed that. They were probably amazed. A little bit later, they're doing something else and Jesus has been walking through Galilee and then all of a sudden he's talking somewhere and there's a roof over him and all of a sudden there's a hole in the roof and people are letting this mat down because they want their friend to be healed.

And they're standing there maybe saying like, what are you doing? Like, and confused. Jesus very calmly makes sure the man knows that he is healed. The time goes on and then Lazarus is not only sick but he's dead.

Jesus shows up and raises him from the dead. And at this point, they're really amazed at what Jesus is doing. Jesus is thirsty, standing at the well, asking the woman for water and they're probably talking to a woman.

He's single, she's Samaritan, he's Jewish and they watch this whole encounter when Jesus says, I want you to go into the world and to tell people what you have learned today. So over and over and over, example after example after example of Jesus' followers being amazed at everything that he did. And then all of a sudden, Jesus is arrested.

All of a sudden, Jesus is nailed to a cross. All of a sudden, Jesus has died on the cross. You talk about being traumatized after spending all these incredible moments with him, at least two or three years of Jesus' ministry, knowing that he's actually the one I should be following and all of a sudden, he's not there.

And they're locked in a room because they're afraid of the religious authorities and they don't know what to do. They are traumatized. And then after Jesus has risen from the dead, he makes an appearance to them.

Peace be with you. As the father sends me, so I send you. A few years ago, I asked you, what if they would have said no, thank you.

They were pretty traumatized. What if Peter might have said to Jesus, now remember, I just denied you three times. And also remember, when you wanted to wash my feet, I said, you're not gonna wash my feet.

No way. So are you sure, really, come on. Are you sure you want me to go into the world? I don't know, I don't know if I can do this.

But Peter didn't say that. Peter went. What about Mary Magdalene? She had a hard life.

She could have very easily said to Jesus, I'm tired. I'm tired and I'm getting old. I just went through the trauma of you not being with us and the angels appeared to me at the tomb.

You tell me to go tell the boys that you're alive. I'm exhausted. I don't think I can do this anymore.

She never said that. She went. What about Thomas? You know, the one that I preached about before, the one that we like to call, scripture likes to call, doubting Thomas.

The one that I like to call seeking or questioning Thomas. He was looking for hope. He was looking for a sign.

It would have been very easy for him to say, Jesus, good heavens. I mean, come on. I wasn't even sure you were alive.

I said you were alive, but I wasn't so sure you were alive. Are you, I don't think it's me that you want to send into the world. Thomas never said that.

He went. Friends, my friends, what was said 2,000 years ago is said to us today. As the father has sent me, so I send you.

You can say no. You can say you're tired. You can say you don't always believe.

You can say that I don't always pray. I'm not the one you need to be sending into the world. My friends, if they would have said no 2,000 years ago, you and I wouldn't be here this morning.

We wouldn't. We would not be in this church, in Trinity Episcopal Church in New Orleans, Louisiana, getting ready to celebrate two baptisms, sending two children into the world. We wouldn't be here, but we are because they said yes.

So on this great feast of Pentecost, please remember the words, as the father sent me, I send you. Go into the world and love unconditionally. Go into the world and forgive when you've been wronged.

Go into the world and be in service of your brothers and sisters, especially to those who are on the margins of society, especially to those who have been pushed to the side that don't think they are included, pushed to the side that don't think they belong, pushed to the side who don't think they belong in this church or in any church.

Go to the ends of the earth. May God give you the grace, the courage, and the faith to go.

Happy Pentecost.