

5.24.26 Pentecost “Come Holy Spirit” Acts 2:1-4

Focus Text

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1–4, ESV)

The Person of the Holy Spirit

“And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.¹”

Pentecost marks the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples, and each year the Church remembers this event as the birth of the Christian Church. Coming after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, Pentecost celebrates both the gift of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the new covenant Christ proclaimed. It is the moment when the Church began its Spirit-filled mission in a new chapter of salvation history.

Over the next three weeks, we will reflect on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Today, we begin with a basic but important question: Who is the Holy Spirit? Next Sunday, we will consider the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture, because the Spirit is not found only in the New Testament. From beginning to end, the Spirit of the living God is active in the story of redemption. On the third Sunday, we will reflect on the Spirit’s power in the life of the Church, remembering that every true work of ministry is inspired and sustained by God. The Church accomplishes nothing on its own; it lives and serves by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, however, we begin by remembering who the Holy Spirit is, as the Nicene Creed teaches. The Church confesses that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. When someone asks, “Who is God?” Christians answer that there is one God in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This truth matters because each person of the Trinity is fully divine and worthy of our worship, reverence, and obedience. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal. They do not compete with one another or stand in opposition to one another. Rather, they work in perfect unity, love, and harmony, each faithfully carrying out His role in the work of creation and redemption.

We owe a great deal to St. Basil, the Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, in what is now modern-day Turkey. Basil played a major role in defending the faith against the Arian and Eunomian heresies. In the early centuries of the Church, Christians wrestled deeply with the question of who God is. Scripture clearly teaches that God is one, yet the works of Jesus show that He is fully equal with the Father. Christ also commanded His people to

¹ *Historic Creeds and Confessions*. 1997. Electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Lexham Press.

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baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Because of this, the Church labored carefully to express how God is one divine being in three distinct persons, and from that work came the language of the Trinity.

Having considered the Trinity more broadly, we now turn to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who powerfully carries out the will of the Father and the Son in the world. We see this in figures like Samson, who received extraordinary strength, and in the apostles, through whom God worked miraculous signs. These acts point not to human power, but to the power of God. The Holy Spirit also reveals and illuminates the truth of Scripture. As the Creed says, He “spoke by the prophets,” and Christians have long confessed that the Spirit inspired the authors of the biblical books so that God’s Word is living, active, and unified in its message. Though many human writers took part in writing Scripture, the Holy Spirit is the divine author who binds it together in one great story of redemption. The Spirit also helps God’s people walk in obedience. Whether in the Old Testament or the New, faithful obedience is never simply the result of human strength. It is the work of God’s grace, as the Holy Spirit leads, strengthens, and sustains His people.

The main point today is simple, yet profound: the God who loves the world does not remain distant from it. In His love, He draws near to humanity, just as He did in the Garden of Eden. And today, it is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who walks with God’s people, strengthens them, and empowers them to live faithfully.

Pentecost is far more than a remembrance of the apostles and their faithfulness. It is a joyful celebration of God’s faithfulness to His people. After Jesus’ ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit declared that God had not abandoned His Church, but had come in power to dwell with His people. The coming of the Spirit fulfilled Jesus’ promise and revealed that, just as Israel depended on the power of God, the Church is not merely a human institution but a people formed, blessed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through every generation, the Spirit has continued to guide, strengthen, and equip believers for faithful witness. So today we rejoice in the birth of the Church and in the steadfast love of God, a love that has been with His people from the Garden of Eden to this very day.

Application.

This week, as we celebrate the birth of the Church, I invite each of us to spend time in daily reflection over the next seven days. Let us take up the simple practice of journaling and record the ways we see the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. May this not only deepen our gratitude, but also strengthen our awareness that God is still present, still active, and still leading His people. Amen.

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“Basil was born around 330 into an aristocratic, wealthy Christian family in Caesarea, Cappadocia (modern Turkey)[1]. His family produced seven saints, including his grandmother Macrina the Elder, his mother Emmilia, his sisters Macrina the Younger and Theosevia, and his brothers Gregory of Nyssa and Peter of Sebaste[1].

Basil excelled as a student of rhetoric and philosophy, studying extensively in Caesarea, Constantinople, and Athens[1]. At Athens he became intimate with Gregory Nazianzen, and the two friends competed with each other in both learning and virtue[2]. However, after his father’s death, Basil abandoned a promising career, sold his property, received baptism, and joined his mother and sister in an ascetic community on a family estate at Annesi in Pontus[1]. He visited monastic institutions in Syria and Egypt before founding several monasteries in Pontus and Cappadocia, becoming the father of monasticism in the East[2].

In 370, Basil became archbishop of Caesarea[1]. The Arian heresy, which denied Christ’s divinity, was sweeping the empire under Emperor Valens, and defending orthodox faith became Basil’s primary task as archbishop, which he pursued with unflinching courage and intellectual power[1]. He engaged in controversies with the extreme Arian party led by Eunomius and the Pneumatomachi, who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit[3]. Basil possessed eloquence, learning, and statesmanship alongside great personal holiness, with a nature both sensitive and pugnacious, and an unusual talent for organization that shaped Eastern monasticism[3]. He established extensive buildings on Caesarea’s outskirts, including churches, hospitals, and hostels for the poor with carefully planned relief systems[3]. He followed rigorous monastic discipline with meager food and harsh practices that damaged his health; at age 49 in 379, worn by work and a serious liver condition, he died commending his spirit to God[1].”²

“Basil distinguished himself by developing new theological language and terminology while articulating a relational understanding of how each person of the Trinity relates to the church.[1] His most significant contribution involved clarifying the conceptual vocabulary that earlier theologians had left ambiguous.

Basil’s major achievement was redefining “hypostasis” and “ousia” to provide precise language for describing the distinct nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[1] Previously these terms were used interchangeably to mean “being,” but Basil employed “hypostasis”

² [1] Michael Whelton, *Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2006), 117–118.

[2] John Thein, in *Ecclesiastical Dictionary: Containing, in Concise Form, Information upon Ecclesiastical, Biblical, Archæological, and Historical Subjects* (New York; Cincinnati; Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1900), 92.

[3] F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167.

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to emphasize the distinction between the Persons while using “ousia” to underscore God’s unity.^[1] This distinction established that the Trinity shares one being (ousia) expressed as three Persons (hypostases).^[2]

Basil’s defense of the Spirit’s equality proved particularly forceful. When the Eunomian heresy claimed the Spirit possessed inferior dignity, Basil countered that baptism equally invokes all three names, establishing their shared status.^[2] He further argued that worship of the Son requires the Holy Spirit, that all three participated in creation with distinct roles, and that the Spirit’s involvement in Christ’s incarnation, baptism, and ministry demonstrates essential equality.^[2] Basil emphasized that the Spirit shares the titles “holy” and “good” with Father and Son, deriving these from “natural and close relationship” and existing eternally with them.^[2]

Basil frequently defended language describing the Spirit as “classified with” and “worshipped with” God, particularly against those who would subordinate the Spirit.^[3] He grounded this equality in [Matthew 28:19](#)’s baptismal formula, treating Christ’s command as the authoritative standard for ecclesiastical doctrine.^[3] Basil’s terminological precision significantly shaped the Trinity’s definition at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.^[2]³

³ [1] Olga Druzhinina and David Rainey, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great: A Trinitarian Approach to the Life of the Church* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016). [See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#).]

[2] Norman R. Gulley, “A One-Sided Trinity in Theology: Its Continuing Impact,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (2005), 16:1:60–61.

[3] Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine*, Cascade Companions (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 16:97–98.