

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 25, 2025
Year of the Holy Spirit

*“It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden
beyond these necessities, . . .” (Acts 15:28)*

Our reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15:1-2, 22-29), offers a keen insight into the early Christian church. Its leaders, the remaining Apostles and disciples of Jesus, rely upon prayer and contemplation, which they believe to be guided by the Holy Spirit, as they make these first initial decisions of Christianity. Their confidence is founded upon these words of Jesus. Saint John records Jesus instructing the Apostles and disciples with these words: *“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.”* (John 14:26). We join our voices, with those of the early Christian church, as we affirm our belief in the Holy Spirit continuing to guide our Catholic/Christian Church.

One aspect, concerning our faith in the Holy Spirit’s activity, centers upon the one-word question: “How?” How does the Holy Spirit lead and guide the Christian faith? I believe this to be an important question due to the continued separation of various Christian denominations. As we begin to formulate an answer, we must acknowledge how the questioning of once held moral and societal norms have led to conclusions which further divide the Christian community. Even though Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Truth” (John 15:26), one may wonder if all these “truths” offered, even those which differ from others, are from the “Truth proceeding from God” or the “truth proceeding from man.” How can we know the difference?

We begin with the acknowledgement that God is the source of Truth. For a Christian, this is the first step toward knowing God. We must relinquish our notions of what truth is and settle upon a belief that God, and only God, is Truth. For our part, we cannot create truth, only discover that truth which is already present in God. A simple way to understand this point: Did Sir Isaac Newton “discover” gravity or was gravity already present?

Once a Christian both accepts and professes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth, then the Christian must judge all things in light of this Truth. In essence, we must seek to understand and live in a reality guided by the Holy Spirit who is Truth. The earliest Christians believed the Holy Spirit was God’s gift to assist them in doing this very thing. He revealed to them, through their prayers and reflections, how to perceive the world around them. The Apostles declare Gentiles as children of God because that is what they really were; they were God’s children too. He blessed them with His Spirit in the same way as He blessed those of Jewish descent. Their reliance upon the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete prevented any decision to be made based upon personal inclinations. This further required a great deal of humility on their part. We, their descendants in the faith, are blessed because they allowed the Holy Spirit to lead and held fast to what He had already revealed as true. There was no need to “reinvent the wheel” of faith, but to believe and accept the truths of the Truth who proceeds from the Father who is Love.