

*Pentecost Sunday*  
*May 24, 2026*  
*Year of the Church in History*

*“If the Gentiles punish their slaves, if any one deny his lord, what think ye the Lord will do unto you, He Who hath the authority over all things?” (The Shepherd of Hermas)*

Quite early in the visions of Hermas, we are introduced to one involving a tower. Although it is explained as an image of the Christian Church, the story would proceed forward. Now as we have come to the end of the narrative, Hermas is taken back to this image and further details are added to assist with its explanation.

*“And he took me away into Arcadia, to a certain rounded mountain, and set me on the top of the mountain, and showed me a great plain, and round the plain twelve mountains, the mountains having each a different appearance. . . And in the middle of the plain he showed me a great white rock, rising up from the plain. . . Now this rock was ancient, and had a gate hewn out of it; but the gate seemed to me to have been hewed out quite recently. . . Now the building of the tower was upon the great rock and above the gate. . . So then, having accomplished these things, the glorious man who was lord of the whole tower called the shepherd to him, and delivered unto him all the stones which lay by the side of the tower, which were cast out from the building, and saith unto him; ‘Clean these stones carefully, and set them in the building of the tower, these, I mean, which can fit with the rest; but those which will not fit, thrown far away from the tower.’”*

(Fourth Mandate, The Shepherd of Hermas)

Hermas’ return to the image of the tower would include a detailed description of the twelve mountains from which the main building material, stone, would be taken from. It would also include a description of those building the tower, those carrying the stone from the quarry and the lord of the tower who arrives to inspect its progress. As interesting as all of this may be for our reflection, I would like to focus upon the stones. The varied stones are brought to construct the tower. As before with the image of the Willow tree and the varied rods, the stones are also described as being of different appearances. Hermas watches as some stones are taken and set with the tower’s foundation. These are placed in such a way as to appear one with the great rock upon which the tower will be constructed. Other stones are added to these foundational stones and they too blend in seamlessly. Some stones are brought from the various mountains having defects which cause them to be rejected until these defects can be polished or chipped out. At one point in the vision, the lord of the tower arrives to inspect the work. As he reviews the tower’s progress, he would notice some stones which had previously been used in the construction as now lacking in either appearance or structure. These must be removed and effort must be given for them to be made again for use. Hermas is told that the builders will continue to improve the stones used, but once the tower is complete, then all stones, those used and those unused, will forever be set in place. No alterations can happen once the tower has been completed.

We are encouraged to view ourselves as these stones needed for the tower. The tower, being an image of the Christian Church, consists of various members (bricks or stones) which are

used in its construction. Once the tower is complete (our death or the End), then all will be eternally permanent.

This parable was used to remind our early Christian ancestors of the permanence of “The End.” Once we experience this moment, either our deaths or the Second Coming of Jesus, all will be set in stone. We are reminded to consider our own end and, drawing from what we have learned about ourselves, to repent and return to God before it is too late. In essence, quoting from the book *“Suffering: The Catholic Answer”* by Dom Hubert van Zeller: *“God does not condemn man to suffering; man condemns himself to suffering. God tells man what is needed for happiness, and, in refusing God’s terms, man condemns himself to unhappiness.”*

On this Pentecost Sunday, we are reminded that it is Holy Spirit who can guide us to understanding our current spiritual condition, seeking always to develop a deeper relationship with God. For the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts, we must present ourselves as being open to Him. To begin this process of becoming “Open,” we must first choose to discipline ourselves towards prayer. We each must deliberately choose to pray. And, we must be consistent in our choice to pray. Does this mean we should set a certain time each day as our prayer time? Yes, it very much means this. The Enemy wants our lives to be chaotic, bouncing from one thing to another. God does not operate within our souls in this fashion. It must be a dedicated, disciplined time each day for our prayer time. How we pray is not as important in the beginning as choosing this time to pray. Once we have established a dedicated prayer time, then we can examine those prayers we say asking which lead me toward a deeper, humbling relationship with God. Through all of this, we will be encouraged, as first century Christians were, to find our true happiness within God and not with other created things. Man’s truest destiny is to be found happy in God and not unhappy in the “perceived happiness” offered by anything else. To do this, we will all be inspected by the Lord and, God willing, not thrown out like an unfit stone destined for the trash heap of eternal suffering.