

THE ROLE AND OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Hear again the Word of God for this Feast of the Pentecost:

But the Paraclete (Comforter, Counselor, Helper), the Spirit, the Holy One, the Father will send in My Name; that One will teach all of you all things; and He will cause you all to remember all things which I said to all of you.”¹

This day of celebration, 50 days after the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord and 10 days after the Feast of the Ascension was remembered, this is the day God has brought us into the time of the year established long ago to help us remember the life of Christ in His Church. Until the new Church year begins in Advent, over 27 Sundays this year, we will hear of the Presence of Jesus in the Church, as we reflect upon His giving to His Church His Word and Sacraments.

For a long, long time, the post-Pentecost season has been subdivided into five parts. The first six Sundays are given to remember the Marks of the Church – in particular: Ministry, Sacraments and Mission. The next six Sundays help us recall the Faith of the Church. The following seven Sundays declare the Love of the Church. Then, five Sundays in 2015 will be for remembering that we, in Christ, Fight the Good Fight of the Faith in the Love of Christ. Finally, as the long, green season ends, four Sundays will call us to remember the Love of God in His giving us Hope as we contemplate the End Times. All of that is given that we might understand and believe that this entire season will be centered in, and grounded in, the Word of God in Christ Jesus. He is the Father’s love for us, the Word of God embodied. This Jesus reminds His followers of as He continues to say:

If anyone sacrificially loves Me, the Word of Me he guards, and the Father of Me sacrificially loves him and with him we will come and we will remain with him.²

¹ John 14:26.

² John 14:23b.

Now we have begun to enter fully into the first section of the Pentecost tide. Here we reflect anew upon Jesus' Ministry, the Sacraments He gave, and His Mission in, for, and through His Church. In love for Jesus the Word, you are free to draw into that Word and rejoice in the indwelling of the triune God.

In a moment, you will be presented with a question that is going to be used to pull you deeper into today's Word of God. You will be asked to develop your answer using all three levels of your personhood, that which some people consider to be a sum of that which it means to be human – your body, mind and soul. (For those who prefer an ancient Hebrew manner of thinking about a person, you are going to be asked to answer using your heart and soul with all the might of your mind)³. As is often the case when such queries are presented from this pulpit, the answer you are asked to provide is likely higher, deeper and broader than that which a quick response may provide. Here is the question: "What reminders of the Holy Spirit's role and Office do we normally have here when God gathers us into His Presence as One Body attached to Jesus our Head?"

If you follow the tradition of our "right-worship" confession of the Faith, you may have begun to answer that question with this question, "What does this mean?" Others among us, those who have learned the rabbinical method of teaching which the inspired Word of God declares that Jesus often used, may have developed at least two different questions as you work to come to an answer to today's question about the Holy Spirit. The first question to the day's question you might phrase like this: "What do you mean by asking about 'the Holy Spirit's role?'" The second question to today's question may be rendered: "How is the Holy Spirit's Office defined?" Those are good questions. Hear now answers to those two questions.

³ *Deuteronomy 6:5; cf. Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; and Luke 10:27.*

The Holy Spirit's role as defined for the purpose of answering today's opening question is this: "The role of the Spirit is to remind Jesus' first disciples of His teaching in order to establish them as accurate witnesses to Jesus' Word (λογος)." The theme text for today's sermon, a proclamation of Jesus' words, declares the Holy Spirit's role very clearly:

*But the Paraclete (Comforter, Counselor, Helper), the Spirit, the Holy One, the Father will send in My Name; that One will teach all of you all things; and He will cause you all to remember all things which I said to all of you."*⁴

The Holy Spirit's role is to teach all things held forth in Jesus' Word (λογος) to those who first heard that promise. His work in His divine role would be to be the causal Agent to bring into their remembrance everything Jesus had said to all of them. The Spirit would prepare the Eleven to witness to the Word of Jesus. (Remember, at this point in history as it is recorded in John's remembrance of Jesus' Word that Judas Iscariot had already gone away from the Table in order to betray Jesus).

The answer to your second assumed question for today regarding the definition of the Holy Spirit's Office is this: "The Office of the Holy Spirit is to liberate the Christian from sin and terror."⁵ Again, a Spirit-illuminated translation of Jesus' Word to His disciples, today's Gospel reading, declares the Holy Spirit's Office very clearly when He brings to the remembrance of John these words which declare that Jesus still says:

*Peace, I leave for you all. Peace (the one which is) Mine, I give to you all. (DO) not let it be troubled the heart of all of you, and not must you all be afraid.*⁶

With those words of Jesus in mind, you are asked again: "What reminders of the Holy Spirit's role and Office do we normally have before us when God gathers us into His Presence as One Body, around One Head, Jesus?"

⁴ John 14:26.

⁵ cf. Luther, Martin. Complete Sermons of Martin Luther, v. 4.1-2, John Nicholas Lenker, ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, (1983) 2000, 332ff.

⁶ John 14:27.

The Holy Spirit's role may be beheld displayed as one enters into this building through the double doors of the Nave. There, on tables and in racks are copies of translations of Jesus' Word. On the table next to the Guest Register, bulletins lay, in which Jesus' Word is recorded in a modern English language translation. On the table next to the window to the Nave, under the glass image of Christ-crucified (a haunting figure that displays His suffering and death for us sinners) our former Altar Bible lays open. Someone around here ensures it is open each week to Jesus' Word as it is contained in the Gospel reading of the Sunday.

Yet, even before one may reach the specific documents which contain the disciples' remembrances of Jesus' Word in translations of the Word, Church Art prepares us to receive their recollections. In the framed case immediately to the right of a person entering the Narthex, there are short summaries coupled with symbols, which tell of the traditions of the lives, works, and mostly violent deaths of those who received the work of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling His role. Opposite that wall hanging is a framed case which holds several symbols that represent the Word ($\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$) in action in the art and symbols of the Church. Near it is a rack which holds material that provides teaching from the Word of Jesus. Further down the wall, clear tract racks hold information with teachings correctly drawn from the Holy Spirit's role of bringing to the disciple's remembrance all that Jesus said and did.

There is even more records of the Holy Spirit's role in that entrance space. Have you been looking past it for a while now? As you pass through that Narthex, just before you turn East to enter the double doors of the Nave, you can find yourself looking at a wooden shadowbox of the Last Supper. Its setting appears to be from before Judas left the Lord's Table (count the figures). Again, this is proof in our age that the Holy Spirit has fulfilled His role among the Eleven. The Word was remembered by the survivors who came through Jesus' Passion, Death, Resurrection

and Ascension. That Word was witnessed to, and recorded, to be later portrayed in art. Jesus, we are reminded, did declare:

But the Paraclete (Comforter, Counselor, Helper), the Spirit, the Holy One, the Father will send in My Name; that One will teach all of you all things; and He will cause you all to remember all things which I said to all of you.”⁷

From that time, the Holy Spirit’s role in working remembrance of Jesus among the first faithful means that the Church has been able to develop helpful aides to the Faith for those of the Faith. These things continue to be drawn and produced from the Word of the disciple’s recollection of the “all things” of Jesus. This “50-day,” the Feast of the Pentecost helps us recall that the Holy Spirit, to fulfill His divine role, was given to sinful men. They were those to whom God had given forgiveness for their abandonment of Jesus in His time of trial and death in their, in your, in the world’s, sins.

How many times have you entered here, giving little thought to how the Holy Spirit has fulfilled the role assigned to Him by the Father and the Son?

The Holy Spirit, through the Word He inspired them to record – the Word of Jesus – moved the composers of the hymns and public services in the books in the chairs of this Nave. The Holy Spirit, having fulfilled His role to bring to remembrance all that Jesus said and did, is evidenced in the stained glass in those windows. His role may be seen in the Stations of the Cross. His completed role in the first faithful witnesses of Jesus death, resurrection and ascension can be beheld in the type of vessels which are placed upon the Lord’s Table. The Holy Spirit’s role of bringing Jesus’ Word to remembrance in the Eleven is found as the Word works in the Church. His Hand is beheld in God’s calling men, through His Church and her pastors, in every generation since the Holy Spirit was poured forth after Jesus’ Ascension, into the One Office that Jesus established.

⁷ John 14:26.

That Office was given to declare, out of completed fulfilling of the role of the Holy Spirit, the Good News of Jesus for every person since He proceeded from the Father and the Son. That Office is the means through which the Holy Spirit performs His Office in those who are saddened and terrified by their sins against the Word of God. The Word was given to be remembered, as the Spirit fulfilled His role. It is to be proclaimed as the Spirit fulfills His Office. The Evangelical, “of the Good News,” confession of the Faith has declared publicly before emperors, kings, princes, bishops, pastors and lay folk the continuing results of the Holy Spirit’s fulfilling His role and Office when it declares:

Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe in him and take him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit. The work is finished and completed, Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection...⁸

There are those among us who have been convicted and/or convinced thus far by the proclamation of the Word of their neglect of regular recognizing and treasuring the role and Office of the Holy Spirit. To you comes Jesus’ Word of Promise. It is not for you who might not care about that which God has done and continues to do for sinners. It is for those who are troubled in body, mind, and soul over their, your, sinful state. Jesus says to you, as the Holy Spirit works in and out of His Office:

Peace, I leave for you all. Peace (the one which is) Mine, I give to you all. (Do) not let it be troubled the heart of all of you, and not must you all be afraid.⁹

You have been asked recently, over the past couple of weeks, to reflect on how many times the Lord declares His peace to you in His services to you. Whether you remember that or not, know this, today Jesus’ Word of peace continues to be proclaimed out of His Service to you. It is being declared as proceeding forth from His first speaking peace, שְׁלוֹמִים, to men who had already had their number reduced by one;

⁸Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia
⁹ John 14:27.

men who would all abandon Jesus. It is remembered among us because those men were restored by Jesus to peace with God through His Word of Forgiveness after they had failed to cling to the peace He had given them.

The Holy Spirit takes Jesus' Word of shalom and declares it into your ears. From there it flows into your body, mind, and soul. The Spirit of the Living God works in His Office to free you from sin and the terrors of death, hell, and eternal separation from the Source of Light and Life. He reminds you that Jesus' Word of peace, recorded as the Holy Spirit fulfilled His role in the lives of the first forgiven and restored followers of Jesus that Jesus' Word of peace is given that your hearts be not troubled.

The Spirit leads us to behold that untroubled and fearless hearts are tied by Jesus to the peace He gives. His is peace with God the Father which Jesus won for us in His death. It is peace with God, with one another, and with all confessing and believing souls to whom the Spirit joins us. This is recalled in our remembrance every time we eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord's New Covenant meal.

That is a helpful Word for this Lord's Memorial Day. In that Word, we are free to remember the One Who fell into death's firm grasp. Through the fulfilled role and ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in His Office, in each remembrance of Jesus' death, that same Spirit opens our ears to hear that God continues to will to give us His peace through His chosen means. Thanks be to God that among us remain the reminders of the Holy Spirit's role and Office.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Pentecost (*LSB One-year series*)

Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-21; John 14:23-31

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Soli Deo Gloria