



## Parishioners' Corner



### **Pentecost 2026: How is the Holy Spirit calling you to renew the face of our Church?**

Today, the Church globally celebrates Pentecost. Think about that – 20 (and 1/4 ) centuries since the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, just as Jesus promised. And that started His church!

I am particularly fond of this liturgical season as the stories of conversion and miracles unfold in the Acts of

the Apostles – 3,000 people converted in one day! For me, this year's celebration is especially significant. I am writing this reflection from Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, during a trip with friends to Turkey. To walk in the footsteps of the saints and martyrs of the Early Church is humbling. To reflect on how God continues to guide His Church, and is working within, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity – is even more humbling.

“Church” is not a building, or a hierarchy of parishes in a diocese, centralized under papal authority. The “church” is the *people* of God, as One Body in Christ. *We are the Church. You, me, the babies being baptized, those who joined the Church on Easter Sunday.*

The “mystery of the Church” is explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part 1, Article 9, #770. Read it sometime and let me know if it inspires you like it has me.

This mystery became more real for me during our visit to Hagia Sophia, the once-majestic basilica opened in 537 AD. It was the most significant religious center of the Byzantine Empire and the scene of coronations. But the building and contents suffered from looting, fire, and earthquakes over the centuries.

During the Ottomans' siege of Istanbul in 1453, Sultan Mehmed II, recognizing the crumbling church as a place of worship, began its conversion to a mosque. The name, Hagia Sophia, which means Holy Wisdom, was retained, a recognition of the ecumenical nature of the Holy Spirit by both Christians and Muslims.

During the refurbishing, the dazzling mosaics and frescoes depicting important Christian images were covered in plaster, in preparation for Islamic artwork. Today the building is more of a museum and work is underway to uncover the Christian artwork that is under the plaster.

During the tour, I was moved by how the beauty and the mystery of our faith transcended time. And it struck me – just as the once-magnificent Hagia Sophia lost its glory and was no longer a place of worship and celebration of the Eucharist, my beloved St. Cornelius church suffered a similar fate. I am not comparing the midcentury-style architecture of the church on Foster Avenue to the grandeur of Hagia Sophia – just that the church where my son received his First Communion and I began my ministry as a catechist is now home to a pickleball club.

But what has not changed, is the most important part of the Church – the people of God. We are the Church. And “Holy Wisdom” is alive in the people of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. In the words of Cardinal Suenens, “...believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit. The story of the Church is, filled with the wonders of the Holy Spirit. Why should we think that God's imagination and love might be exhausted?” This Pentecost, consider what the Spirit is inviting you to do in our church. Come, be a part of something greater.

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