

JUNE 2 2025, FATHER PETER TURRONE

Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?”

They replied, “No. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

Years ago, while in the seminary, our professor of theology was giving us a lecture on the Holy Spirit and the Trinity. He spent a lot of time talking about the Holy Spirit and said, “The Holy Spirit is the unknown God.” He’s the unknown third person of the Holy Trinity—and he’s absolutely right.

If you were to go and ask many people—family and friends—who the Holy Spirit is, they’ll have no idea. Just like today in the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul asked the new converts, they said, “We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

Even though we may have heard of the Holy Spirit—and we certainly receive him at baptism and confirmation—we still often know very little. In fact, we hear the words at confirmation: our names, followed by, “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is constantly operating in our lives—even during the Mass. When you hear the words of consecration, just before that the priest says: “Father, send your Holy Spirit so that this bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus.” When we go to confession, we hear: “Through the Holy Spirit...” The Holy Spirit is always there, working with the Father and the Son.

I remember an experience years ago, prior to entering the seminary, during the lead-up to the third millennium. At Steubenville, there were three conferences—1997, 1998, and 1999. I went with other young adults, and we attended. The 1998 conference was dedicated to the Holy Spirit, and it was a beautiful opportunity. The reflections helped us

understand who the Holy Spirit is, how to pray to him, and what he wants to give us and do through us.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has many beautiful teachings on the Holy Spirit. He is the third person of the Trinity. When we pray the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, we affirm this. He is the one who sanctifies us. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit, who comes to live inside of us. He is God as the artisan—wanting to create something beautiful in us and for the world. He wants to recreate the image of Jesus in each of us.

He does this in very subtle ways, but the more we turn to him and ask him for grace, the more we will receive blessings. Throughout all of Scripture, in all of Revelation, the Holy Spirit is there. He is revealed to us by God.

At the beginning of creation, the Spirit hovers over the waters. In a dramatic way, the Holy Spirit comes to Mary, and she conceives through his power. Then, at Pentecost, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit upon the Church.

When we reflect on confirmation, we recall that we were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. He imparted to us gifts and fruits. One of those gifts is courage—the grace to proclaim our faith, especially in times of persecution, as Jesus says in today's Gospel.

Today, more than 300 million Christians are being persecuted for their faith around the world. Even if we're not being actively persecuted, we may still feel shy or afraid of what others might say. We miss opportunities to speak about our faith—even when someone close to us is struggling, and we know God wants to offer them mercy, healing, and love. That's when we need the Holy Spirit's courage.

Dr. Mary Healy, a wonderful theologian, speaks often about the charisms of the Holy Spirit. These charisms are distinct from the gifts and fruits. All Catholics receive gifts and fruits for personal sanctification. But charisms are given for the benefit and sanctification of others—for building up the Church and the world around us.

Charisms come and go. We may receive them for a brief time or for many years, but their purpose is always to build up the Church. So during these days—as we’re in the midst of the Novena to the Holy Spirit, the oldest novena in the Church—we can reflect and ask:

“Lord, what gift have you given me? What charism have you placed in my life for your glory?”

If you’re not sure, ask your family or friends. Ask your spiritual director, if you have one: “Do you recognize something in me that God can use?”

This is not pride. Don’t be afraid to acknowledge what God has given you. So long as we recognize that it’s God’s gift—and that he gives it for as long as he wills—we honour him by using it. We don’t want to begrudge the Holy Spirit or be afraid of his generosity.

Ask him, “Lord, what have you given me? How can I be used by you to manifest your presence to others?”

That’s what all the saints have done. Every saint has received the same gifts, but each was given different charisms. Some have the charism of teaching. Others have hospitality or administration. Some have healing.

I knew a spiritual mother who passed away five years ago, and I hope one day her cause might be opened. She had the gift of healing. The bishop used to bring people to her. She would lay her hands on them, and they were cured—of cancer, of many illnesses. It was remarkable.

The first time I met her, she took my hand and held it in hers. Without ever having met me, she told me the story of my life. She revealed things from my past I had misunderstood, helped me make sense of the present, and even shared glimpses of the future. It was all from the Spirit.

God gives us many gifts—not just for ourselves, but to build up his Church.

So I encourage you: ask the Holy Spirit. Be bold. Say, “Please help me to know what you want me to do for your glory, Lord—and I will surrender to it.”

As we approach Pentecost, may that be our prayer. Amen.