



Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

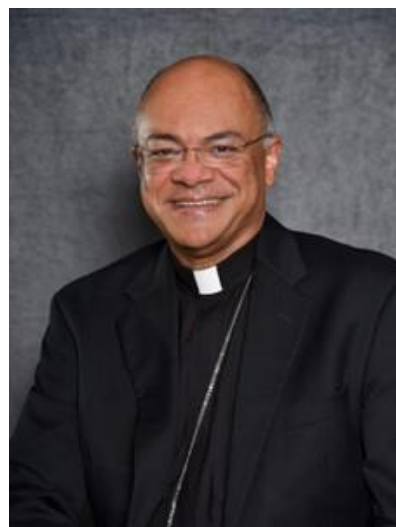
June 2025

Rebirth by the Fire of the Holy Spirit

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Sunday, June 8, we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday. This is the day when we remember with great joy the gift of the Holy Spirit which was given to our Church by God the Father and by His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of this gift, our Church was born, and the Apostles were able to carry the Gospel message to the ends of the earth.

In the Gospel reading for Pentecost Sunday (Jn 20:19–23), the Evangelist describes the miracle of God's grace that made bold Spirit-filled evangelizers of the cowardly disciples who were hiding behind locked doors out of fear:



On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

"Peace be with you" is the greeting spoken to us—and to all people of good will—by Pope Leo XIV immediately after he accepted the sacred responsibility of serving as the Successor of Saint Peter. Our new pope is himself a gift to the Church and to the world freely given by our Triune God through the working of the Holy Spirit in the conclave that followed the death of our beloved Pope Francis.

Once again, on Pentecost Sunday our Church will celebrate its rebirth by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Once again, we will affirm our faith in the apostolic succession that, as Pope

Leo says, gives witness to the unity and love that are our inheritance as children of God and our mission as disciples and missionaries of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last month, on Monday, May 12, more than 300 people, including at least 40 priests and deacons, filled the Cathedral of the Assumption for our Archdiocese's celebration of a Mass of Thanksgiving for Pope Leo XIV. During my homily that evening, I called our new pope "a gift from the Church in the United States (from Chicago!) to the world." This gift has been made possible because, despite our many challenges, the Holy Spirit remains with us, filling our hearts with the fire of his love and building up the Church here in the Union States of America!

The beginning of Pope Leo's Petrine ministry marks a new time of hope and expectation. When our Holy Father first stepped out onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica after his election, and said, "Peace be with you," he was echoing the words of the risen Jesus Christ to his apostles on the first Pentecost Sunday. "Peace be with you" signifies a profound peace that is much more than simply the absence of war. The peace that Pope Leo boldly proclaims in our world today that suffers so much from disharmony, division, and war is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit. God alone can bring unity and peace to people torn apart by injustice, corruption, and economic inequality. Christ alone is the Way to Peace.

A pope's first remarks reflect his vision and his intentions, and Pope Leo's first statements have been truly inspiring. Just as Jesus asked Saint Peter to care for his flock, Pope Leo is entrusted with the sacred duty to care for the Universal Church, and for all God's children everywhere. What's more, our new pope must carry out this responsibility with humility and compassion after the example of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd.

Like Saint Peter, our new pope is called to love Jesus "more than these" and to serve his Church with honesty, integrity, and self-sacrificing love. The essence of the pope's role is not rooted in power or prestige but is rooted in service. That's why one of the most significant titles the pope is given identifies him as "the servant of the servants of God," which captures the core of his ministry, serving the Church and its members with humility and selflessness.

As we begin this new chapter in the history of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, let's ask the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and renew them with the holy fire of God's love. Let's also pray for Pope Leo XIV, for his family, and for all of us who are called to love him and support him in his new ministry.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Shelton J. Fabre

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

**A Message from Pope Leo XIV: In the one Christ, we are one
Together, as one people, let us walk towards God and love one another.**

Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you with a heart full of gratitude at the beginning of the ministry that has been entrusted to me. Saint Augustine wrote: “Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (*Confessions*, I: 1,1).

In these days, we have experienced intense emotions. The death of Pope Francis filled our hearts with sadness. In those difficult hours, we felt like the crowds that the Gospel says were “like sheep without a shepherd” (*Mt* 9:36). Yet on Easter Sunday, we received

his final blessing and, in the light of the resurrection, we experienced the days that followed in the certainty that the Lord never abandons his people, but gathers them when they are scattered and guards them “as a shepherd guards his flock” (*Jer 31:10*).

In this spirit of faith, the College of Cardinals met for the conclave. Coming from different backgrounds and experiences, we placed in God’s hands our desire to elect the new Successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, a shepherd capable of preserving the rich heritage of the Christian faith and, at the same time, looking to the future, in order to confront the questions, concerns and challenges of today’s world. Accompanied by your prayers, we could feel the working of the Holy Spirit, who was able to bring us into harmony, like musical instruments, so that our heartstrings could vibrate in a single melody.

I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, *I come to you as a brother*, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God’s love, for he wants us all to be united in one family.

Love and unity: these are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to Peter by Jesus.

We see this in today’s Gospel, which takes us to the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus began the mission he received from the Father: to be a “fisher” of humanity in order to draw it up from the waters of evil and death. Walking along the shore, he had called Peter and the other first disciples to be, like him, “fishers of men”. Now, after the resurrection, it is up to them to carry on this mission, to cast their nets again and again, to bring the hope of the Gospel into the “waters” of the world, to sail the seas of life so that all may experience God’s embrace.

How can Peter carry out this task? The Gospel tells us that it is possible only because his own life was touched by the infinite and unconditional love of God, even in the hour of his failure and denial....

Peter is thus entrusted with the task of “loving more” and giving his life for the flock. The ministry of Peter is distinguished precisely by this self-sacrificing love, because the Church of Rome presides in charity and its true authority is the charity of Christ. It is never a question of capturing others by force, by religious propaganda or by means of power. Instead, it is always and only a question of loving as Jesus did.

Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for *a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world*.

In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalises the poorest. For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world. We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of love and become his one family: *in the one Christ, we are one*. This is the path to follow together, among ourselves but also with our sister Christian churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will, in order to build a new world where peace reigns!

This is the missionary spirit that must animate us; not closing ourselves off in our small groups, nor feeling superior to the world. We are called to offer God's love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people. Brothers and sisters, this is the hour for love! The heart of the Gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters. With my predecessor Leo XIII, we can ask ourselves today: If this criterion "were to prevail in the world, would not every conflict cease and peace return?" (*Rerum Novarum*, 21).

With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God's love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made "restless" by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.

Together, as one people, as brothers and sisters, let us walk towards God and love one another.

(A selection from the homily of Pope Leo XIV for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 18, 2025.)

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying these words of Pope Leo XIV:

Therefore, as we entrust to Mary the service of the Bishop of Rome, Pastor of the universal Church, let us, from the "Barque of Peter," look to her, Star of the Sea, Our Lady of Good Counsel, as a sign of hope. We implore her intercession for the gift of peace, for support and comfort for those who suffer, and for the grace for all of us to be witnesses to the Risen Lord.