

Good morning! First of all, I would like to introduce myself briefly for those of you who might be confused as to why an 18 year old girl is giving the sermon today.

My name is Mary Shelton, and I am a very recent graduate of Hendersonville High School. I have been attending St. John in the Wilderness my entire life. I was baptized here and confirmed here. I've attended many, many Sunday School classes and parish breakfasts. I have acolyted and read many times, but one thing I have never done is delivered the homily

So, Father Josh was kind enough to offer me this opportunity on St. John's first ever Senior Sunday that fell on Pentecost.

As I was preparing for this sermon, one of the initial issues I ran into was the mere fact that I don't know how to write a sermon. I've written countless argumentative essays, research papers, and speeches, but never a sermon.

Looking for some guidance, I read over the readings for this Sunday, and I started exactly where my former AP English teacher, Ms. Phillis, would have suggested: the context. This Gospel reading takes place in Jerusalem fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, and is rightfully one of the most recognizable events in the New Testament. The intense wind, the wild flames, and just the impossibility of the miracle that was unfolding right in front of the people of Jerusalem define this special day, and while all this impactful imagery and these intense colors are what many people initially think of when they think of Pentecost, the real catalyst behind the miracle is invisible.

You see Pentecost marks the descent of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus' disciples, some of Jesus' most devout followers at that point. The disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and miraculously began just speaking in foreign languages. Prior to this event, God's influence was still fairly limited, and his disciples thought about Jesus and the Father primarily in the human form. However, the miraculous way that the Holy Spirit manifested itself that day gave the Disciples no doubt that God is not just found through the temporary physical form in Jesus, but will also have a permanent presence on Earth through the Holy Spirit. This deeper understanding of the trinity, that God is not only Father and Son but also spirit radically changed the apostles. Empowered by the spirit the disciples set out to spread the Gospel in new languages thereby laying the groundwork for the church as we know it

There are so many parts of this story that are worthy of being talked about, but as I was trying to focus this sermon on one specific portion, I kept on returning to just how much the disciples themselves were changed by their encounter with the Holy Spirit. I mean these are people who literally walked along with Christ, yet Pentecost truly changed their view of God and motivated them to go spread the Gospel in a way they had never before.

It is truly remarkable to me that some of the people who lived alongside Jesus still had the capacity to grow so much in their faith. Pentecost opened their hearts and minds even further to the idea of a third, invisible being that works to fulfill God's will. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the disciples became entirely new

people. Not only were they able to speak different languages but they went out and evangelized and eventually laid the groundwork for the church as we know it today.

This just shows that no matter where you are in your life, your walk with Christ is never complete.

The disciples had just watched only about 53 days prior as Jesus was crucified and laid in his tomb yet their journey with Christ was not complete.

The disciples had just watched 50 days prior as Jesus was resurrected and rolled the stone away yet their journey with Christ was still not complete

Jesus' disciples trusted in the Lord God and allowed themselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Their willingness to put full faith in God in all forms of the trinity and to spread the Gospel on this fateful Sunday led to one of the greatest breakthroughs on our Church calendar.

If people who walked literally in the footsteps of Christ can be forever impacted by an encounter with the Holy Spirit, we definitely can too, but you have to be willing to let God guide you.

If we remain stationary in our spiritual walk with Christ and don't allow for the Holy Spirit to lead and to teach us, God's will in our lives may remain unfulfilled.

it might seem difficult to see the path that God has carved out for you because there are so many unknowns. What college do I go to? Do I really want to move that far away from my family? Will my life ever be the same again? And then there's the reverse of that when the path might seem crystal clear.

He has given you a family, a career, and a purpose, yet in both scenarios God is not done with you. The Holy Spirit is constantly moving and regardless of whether you think your life has been laid out for you or if you think that everything is about to change, our Lord is to thank for it all.

This journey with Christ begins with putting full faith into Him. Know and believe that He will put you in the right places with the right people; let the Holy Spirit guide you because it will never steer you wrong.

Just like many other seniors, this is something that I have been trying to lean into recently. There is so much uncertainty about the next four years of my life as a senior in high school, and the countless number of guidance counselor appointments or college visits could've never prepared me to make so many decisions about my future. I prayed about choosing a college ever since the beginning of the admissions cycle last summer. I worried that somehow I wouldn't end up in the right place, but I have faith that God will guide me through this transitional phase of my life with the help of the Holy Spirit. I mean he has placed me in an amazing family. He has put me on the Diocesan Youth Council. He's guided me to meet some of my closest friends at Camp Henry, and of course, and he has raised me in one of the most

spectacular churches that I consider a second home. I know that his work with me is anything but done. However, the Holy Spirit can only give the amount of guidance that you are willing to receive; keep an open mind because the Holy Spirit will manifest itself in ways that you couldn't even imagine.

Looking back at the disciples they never could have imagined what the Holy Spirit had in store for them, and their decision to wholeheartedly put their faith in him contributed to the birth of the church that we still celebrate every year.

So, I urge you whether you're graduating like me, starting a new chapter or simply showing up in faith today, remember that the Holy Spirit is still moving. God's work in your life is not finished, and your journey with Christ is ongoing. Just like the disciples, we are called to be open—to be surprised, transformed, and led by something greater than ourselves. When you let the Holy Spirit in, you might just find yourself speaking new languages, walking new paths, and becoming someone you never imagined you could be.