

May 26, 2019 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
when you are referring to God, and to Holy Spirit?

should I capitalized H for only Jesus or also

The Sunday school children, especially the first grade were having their picture taken with the pastor of the parish and he was sitting in the middle. Then, he tried to persuade them to buy a picture. He said, "Look, just think how nice this will be when you look back and say, "There's Jennifer, she's a lawyer now, or that's Michael, he's a doctor now." A small voice in the back of the room cried out, "And there's our pastor, he's dead."

In our first reading, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we have been reading the same story and it's being set up for what we come to today since chapter 10. In chapter 10 we begin to see Peter out evangelizing and running into an interesting situation. That is, the gentiles are coming up to him and wanting to be followers of Christ. Well, this is not why they were sent and it opens up lots of questions. The current thought is that they have to become Jews before they become Christian. They have to be circumcised if they are men, they have to follow the dietary laws, follow the 613 laws of everyday living, etc. etc. Peter starts off thinking it's okay, but then he starts wondering, maybe not. Then God gives him a vision which we'll talk about in a minute. It also happens to the other disciples that are out evangelizing, gentiles, the non-Jews want to become Christians, followers of Christ. They were not called Christians at this point, they were called, "Those Jesus people." In fact, on the Navajo reservation today, that's what their called, "Jesus people." Because they had all kinds of different religions going on. So, Paul decides, "You know what?" The head of the Church at this time is in Jerusalem, Rome does not enter the picture yet. We don't know what bishops are, we don't know what priests are, we don't know what deacons are at this point. All we know is that there our leaders. So, Paul goes back to Jerusalem and he talks to Saint James. Saint James is the leader of the Church in Jerusalem, so Saint James under the guidance of the Holy Spirit calls together all of the religious leaders, all the disciples, the apostles that are around. We call this the First Council of Jerusalem. This council sets up something that we continue to use even until today. There were several councils like this in the early Church but they're different than the councils you and I know. We call them ecumenical councils because it means Universal Church. All the bishops have to come together in these ecumenical councils and decide on doctrine and dogma, teaching. But back then, there was not this idea of universality yet, they didn't have ecumenical because they didn't have bishops and all this set up. You have to remember; this was only 20-25 years after Jesus ascended into heaven. So, they come together and they say, what do we want to do? Do we want to make gentiles have to become Jews first, like the current practice or do we want to think of something else? What does it take, they said, to be saved? And it came down to, they argued, they discussed, and all of a sudden Peter came in and Peter says, "Guys, you won't believe what God showed me in a vision." What Peter left out was, God had to show him three visions before he got the message. I don't know what it is with 3's with Peter. But, God sent down this tarp in a vision to Peter and on this tarp was all the animals that the Jews could not eat. Pigs, catfish, lobster, shrimp, crab, all the stuff that we eat today, they couldn't eat back then. God says, "Take and eat." And Peter says, "Oh no Lord, I would never do that, my Mother would have a fit, I've learned from my youth." So God brings it back up. Another time, He drops it down, "Peter, take and eat." "Oh no God, I've been a good Jew all my life." See, there's still that controversy, what is he? So God brings it down a third time, "Take and eat." Then< "Ah ha!" He's figured it out. So, he tells these guys in the Council of Jerusalem, Saint James, Saint Paul, all those guys, and they realize that God is letting them know, salvation is through Jesus

Christ. Not through following laws, rules and regulations but through saving grace. They get this idea because of the Holy Spirit. Because they pray to the spirit of Jesus which we call the Holy Spirit. They pray to the Holy Spirit and they say, "Please help us. You came down at Pentecost and we knew what to do, please help us this time." So the Holy Spirit shows them what to do. You cannot put tons of rules and regulations on people, make it a law, and expect them to understand saving grace, understand God's love, understand God's mercy, understand all of that and be circumcised as well. So this became the break between Judaism and Christianity. Before that, they were going to synagogues on Saturday night and having church on Sunday morning. Now, they were no longer going to synagogues, they knew who they were, followers of Christ. And because of the way Christ did it, they said they had the ability to be saved by grace, not by how many rules and regulations you followed. Now, it took some time before ecumenical councils. It takes time before doctrine and dogma and teachings to evolve. Our minds can't take it in all at one time. You have to learn, you have to grow, you have to mature, so over time, this happened. The first ecumenical council happened not until 325, this was the Council of Nicea. Since then, we've had 21 councils. The Council of Nicea is interesting because we are still doing what it taught. It said that Arianism, which denied that Jesus was true God and true man, is no good. They adopted the Nicene Creed. What's the Nicene Creed? It's the one we say every Sunday and we're going to say today. They decreed a formula that would fix the day of Easter, it moves around but they fixed the formula. And, they recognized Rome, Antioch and Alexandria as the three main locations and centers of the Church at that time. And they granted Jerusalem a position of honor which it holds to today. Since then we've had many councils and they've put out doctrine and dogma or they've been teaching. A teaching a pastoral council Vatican II did not decree anything new, it just restated what the Church understood and what the Church knew. It didn't have, "You will do this or anathema sit." Anathema sit means, you will go to hell. Some of councils had that at the end of it. You will believe this or else, go to hell. These councils are interesting in that they are infallible when the Pope okays them. We have had 21. The Pope being infallible has only happened three to five times, depending on how you look at it.

What's interesting is, all these councils build on the previous one and do not correct the last one. Why? Because the Holy Spirit dwells within the Church. The Holy Spirit makes sure that we are continuous, that we don't go back and reverse our gears and change things because of fads and fashions of the times. It's the same thing with Popes. People say, "Oh, the Holy Spirit chooses the Pope." No He doesn't. If you look at history, we've had some horrible Popes. Saint Charles Borromeo walked in on the Pope and he was marrying his illegitimate daughter to her husband, and he had several mistresses, on and on and on. But when they taught as Popes, the Holy Spirit guided them so that we have never had to correct a teaching of a Pope. They built upon each other, moved forward. In scripture, the same thing. From the book of Genesis to Revelation could be 4,000 years maybe longer, many different authors, many different cultures, and yet, it's all one continuous message of salvation because the Holy Spirit dwells within the Church. Like Bishop said last week in confirmation to the confirmandi, "The Holy Spirit dwells within each of us; baptism, confirmation, ordination." But, he said, "Only by accepting the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells within us can we acknowledge the gifts and us them, can we move forward as Catholic Christians." If we deny those gifts, if we say, "I don't want them, I'm afraid to do that." Then we are denying the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We're not letting Him do His job. Jesus said, "I will send you an advocate." The Holy Spirit. "And He will teach you everything." When I was in high school and college I said, "Okay, help me with these tests, teach me about these tests." Kind of a little be late on test day but you know. I must have not been a good receptacle because I graduated college with a C average.

What are you gonna do? I graduated. So, He said, "I'll send you the Holy Spirit." All we have to do is claim the Holy Spirit. "Yes, Holy Spirit help me. Yes, Holy Spirit guide me." You get in the car first thing in the morning, you drive to work or wherever you're going to go, "Holy Spirit, help me be a better driver. Watch over the other drivers so we all don't get into any problems." I'm a student, I'm going to school, "Holy Spirit, help me be a better student, help me learn like I'm supposed to, don't let me be distracted by the clowns and the bullies. Holy Spirit, help me." This is who we should be calling upon every time we are trying to do something. I call on upon Him when I'm going to the airport because of TSA. I have to ask for help getting through TSA without losing my temper, it works. Believe me, it works. Only one time have I lost my temper and that's because they took me into the room and wanted to drop my pants. I almost missed the flight.

We need the Holy Spirit. We have to ask for Him. Remember what the first council said. Grace is not through what we do, the rules we follow, grace is through asking for it. Because Jesus made it that was for us on the cross. The Holy Spirit is the most underutilized person of the Blessed Trinity and we should use Him more. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Spirit, miracles happen.

God bless you.