

[Spirituality](#)  
[Soul Seeing](#)



(Unsplash/Sunguk Kim)

by Patrick T. Reardon

[View Author Profile](#)

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

February 15, 2025

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

In my mind's eye, I see the Holy Spirit hovering over the typewriter repair shop on Belmont Avenue, over the neo-Gothic Chicago Tribune skyscraper on Michigan Avenue and over my parish, St. Gertrude on Granville Avenue.

I don't think I ever went into that typewriter repair shop kitty-corner from Shuba's Tavern on Chicago's North Side, but I saw it often enough, driving past and thinking that it was there when I'd need it. I never did, and now it's gone, although Shuba's is still doing good business.

Typewriters were replaced by word processors, then personal computers. They were, suddenly, obsolete. It had to be jarring for whomever worked in that shop. Writing, storytelling and communicating — that's the Holy Spirit hovering — continue to happen, but the typewriter is no longer part of that creative process.

For 32 years, I had a great career as a reporter at the Tribune. The paper was rich and fat, and I was sent all over the country and even to the southern tip of Africa. I worked on stories nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and interviewed presidents, mayors and great writers.

Then, the internet happened. People no longer wanted to pay for news when they could get it for free online. It was jarring for all of us. The Tribune had been a Chicago institution for a century and a half, and then, very suddenly, it wasn't. In a 13-month period, ending in April 2009, nearly 200 staff members took buyouts or were laid off. I was in the final group of layoffs.

People will always want news, so gathering and providing stories — the hovering of the Holy Spirit again — continue to be done; but, increasingly, newspapers are being elbowed to the side.

## Advertisement

My wife and I are cradle Catholics from the middle of the 20th century. We were born into a church that, at least in America, had packed Masses each Sunday. We've been members at St. Gertrude for 40 years and are part of a group of people our age who have made the parish a center of our lives.

But we're aging out, and there aren't many young adults taking our places. The same is true for the priests. In the past four years, the Archdiocese of Chicago cut its [316](#) parishes down to just [216](#). Among the reasons: Church membership and attendance have been dwindling, and there just aren't enough priests to go around.

Catholicism, not only in Chicago but around the world, is at a moment of great change. And here's where I'm hearing the Holy Spirit hover very loudly.

The hovering of the Holy Spirit is not something you or I can hear with our human ears. Neither can you and I see the movement of the Spirit in the world, in our daily life, with our human eyes.

But with faith, any one of us can feel the Spirit doing the job of inspiring us, of encouraging us, of leading us in the right direction. Change is difficult to undergo and can feel overwhelming. With faith, though, you and I can trust in the Spirit.

Catholicism, not only in Chicago but around the world, is at a moment of great change. And here's where I'm hearing the Holy Spirit hover very loudly.

[Tweet this](#)

Don't get me wrong: It's not like I think the church is going to disappear like typewriters or dwindle in importance like newspapers. But I have the sense that the Holy Spirit is going to ask a lot of us to adapt to a world that is much different from the one of a hundred years ago, much different from the one just 30 years ago.

The teachings of Jesus are as important today as they've ever been — you could argue that maybe they're more important — and the need for Catholics to live like Jesus is similarly crucial.

We're at a turning point, and the Holy Spirit is the traffic cop.

As a young child, I fell in love with Catholicism through the beauty of St. Thomas Aquinas Church — its majestic altar, its elegantly carved wood, its gold and jewels, its stained-glass windows, its soaring ceilings. But, at this turning point, does the Holy Spirit want us to center ourselves so much on such buildings?

When I graduated from the parish grade school at the age of 13, I was one of four boys who were going into the seminary. I lasted nine years before deciding, still four years short of ordination, that I'd rather find someone to marry. Around that time, the Holy Spirit convinced church leaders that 13 was too young to start to study for the priesthood.

At today's turning point, what else will the Holy Spirit have to say? Will the Holy Spirit steer us toward ordaining non-males and married people? Or will the Holy Spirit steer us toward making laypeople as important in the church's ministry as priests? How will the Holy Spirit steer us to adapt the methods we use to communicate the lessons of Jesus, the teachings of the Savior, to the world? Will it have something to do with social media? Or with turning our backs on social media?

I can't say. I don't know the road we're on, although I know we're on a new road. And I'm glad that we aren't on this road alone. I'm glad to have all the rest of you. And, even more, I'm glad to have the Holy Spirit as our traffic cop.