

Weekend Readings & Reflections

June 4-5, 2022: Pentecost

Reflection: The giving of the Spirit to the new people of God crowns the mighty acts of the Father in salvation history. The Jewish feast of Pentecost called all devout Jews to Jerusalem to celebrate their birth as God's chosen people in the covenant Law given to Moses at Sinai (see [Leviticus 23:15–21](#); [Deuteronomy 16:9–11](#)). In today's First Reading the mysteries prefigured in that feast are fulfilled in the pouring out of the Spirit on Mary and the Apostles (see [Acts 1:14](#)). The Spirit seals the new law and new covenant brought by Jesus, written not on stone tablets but on the hearts of believers, as the prophets promised (see [2 Corinthians 3:2–8](#); [Romans 8:2](#)). The Spirit is revealed as the life-giving breath of the Father, the Wisdom by which He made all things, as we sing in today's Psalm. In the beginning, the Spirit came as a "mighty wind" sweeping over the face of the earth (see [Genesis 1:2](#)). And in the new creation of Pentecost, the Spirit again comes as "a strong, driving wind" to renew the face of the earth. As God fashioned the first man out of dust and filled him with His Spirit (see [Genesis 2:7](#)), in today's Gospel we see the New Adam become a life-giving Spirit, breathing new life into the Apostles (see [1 Corinthians 15:45, 47](#)). Like a river of living water, for all ages He will pour out His Spirit on His body, the Church, as we hear in today's Epistle (see also [John 7:37–39](#)). We receive that Spirit in the sacraments, being made a "new creation" in Baptism (see [2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Galatians 6:15](#)). Drinking of the one Spirit in the Eucharist (see [1 Corinthians 10:4](#)), we are the first fruits of a new humanity—fashioned from out of every nation under heaven, with no distinctions of wealth or language or race, a people born of the Spirit.

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome to our discussion for Pentecost Sunday, let us begin with prayer:

All: God our Father, let the Spirit you sent on your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Leader: If you had been in that upper room with Mary and the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost, what would you have initially thought was happening when the loud noise occurred and the tongues of fire appeared? The story of the coming of Pentecost to the apostles in wind and fire is more than a history lesson. It's also about how the Holy Spirit transforms our lives. Let us reflect on this as we find what this all means in today's video.

Play the video on FORMED.org: [Opening the Word – Pentecost Sunday \(Year C\)](#)



Digging Deeper - Life in the Spirit

“He [the Holy Spirit], then, gives us the ‘pledge’ or ‘first fruits’ of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as ‘God [has] loved us.’ This love (the ‘charity’ of 1 Corinthians 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received ‘power’ from the Holy Spirit. By this power of the Spirit, God’s children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear ‘the fruit of the Spirit: . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.’ ‘We live by the Spirit’; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we ‘walk by the Spirit.’ Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God ‘Father’ and to share in Christ’s grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory.” — CCC 735-736

FIRST READING ~ Acts 2:1-11 ~

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest feast which also involved a liturgical celebration of bringing water into the temple and pouring water from the side of the altar. Life-giving water would symbolically flow from Jerusalem and give life to the whole world! Jesus fulfills and replaces this Jewish feast saying that out of him will flow life-giving water (Jn 7:37-39).

- What does this image of Pentecost teach you?

Pentecost is the reversal of the Old Testament Tower of Babel story (see Gen 11). Humankind's sin and self importance building the tower to reach and equal God eventuated in the scattering of people and the confusion caused by different languages. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost unites people and leads people to understand each other and the Christian message 'in his native language'.

- What does this suggest is the true function of the Holy Spirit in the world? In the Church?



SECOND READING ~ 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 ~

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Paul wrote to the Community at Corinth because some people who didn't have the gift of tongues were considered inferior. It was causing division in the community. One gift was not to be stressed over another.

- Everyone is gifted What gift do you find easy to share and benefit others with? What gift do you feel you would like to develop more and use for God and the community?

The Spirit and 'gifts' are connected to the 'body'.

- Which part of the 'body' do you identify with your gifts - eyes, head, heart, hands, mouth, ears. How do you show this in your daily life?

GOSPEL ~ John 20:19-23 ~

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."

Jesus is able to pass through locked doors to offer peace and forgiveness.

- *What 'locked doors' are present in your life? Use your imagination in a time of prayer and allow Jesus to meet you on the other side of these locked doors..... what happened?*

The Spirit sends the Disciples / the Church 'on mission'. The Church is as it were 'plugged in' to a living power moulding all into the image and consciousness of Christ. Pentecost fills the Church and allows the Church to be the extension of Jesus' ministry in the world.

- *What feelings and thoughts arise in a person when they are 'sent'? Are you conscious of being sent out by the Father to 'repair the world'?*

In the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles the Holy Spirit had a difficult time in getting the disciples out from hiding behind locked doors and praying in the temple and in people's homes. It was only persecution in Jerusalem that eventually caused the light of the good news of Jesus to be given 'to all the nations'. Welcoming gentiles into the christian community was a huge obstacle and struggle for Jews who were the first christians.

- *What are the big obstacles to unity and inclusion in the Church today? How could the Church be more reconciling in the marketplace and with those the world 'excludes'? What is one action that you will do to be 'livingtheword' this week?*



MEDITATION

After his death and resurrection Jesus promised to give his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said to them, *Receive the Holy Spirit!* (John 20:22) Jesus knew that his disciples would need the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission entrusted to them. The gift of the Holy Spirit was conditional upon the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father. That is why Jesus instructed the apostles to *wait in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high* (Luke 24:49). Why did they need *power from on high*? The Gospels tell us that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was baptized at the Jordan River:

"And John bore witness, 'I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him... this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'" (John 1:32,33; Mark 1:8; Matthew 3:11).

"And Jesus, *full of the Holy Spirit*, returned from the Jordan, and was *led by the Spirit* for forty days in the wilderness... and Jesus returned in the *power of the Spirit* into Galilee" (Luke 4:1,14).

Just as Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at the beginning of his ministry, so the disciples needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is given to all who are baptized into Jesus Christ to enable us to live a new way of life - a life of love, peace, joy, and righteousness (Romans 14:17). The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the love of God (Romans 5:7), and he gives

us the strength and courage we need in order to live as faith-filled disciples of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:26), and enables us to grow in spiritual freedom - freedom from doubt, fear, and from slavery to our unruly desires (2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 8:21). The Spirit instructs us in the ways of God, and guides us in living according to God's will. The Spirit is the source and giver of all holiness. Isaiah foretold the seven-fold gifts that the Spirit would give: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2).

The gift of Pentecost - the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual gifts and blessings of God - are made possible through the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. After his resurrection Jesus "breathed" on his disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit. Just as God breathed life into Adam, so the gift of the Holy Spirit is an impartation of "new life" for his people. With the gift of the Holy Spirit a new creation begins. God recreates us for his glory. Jesus' gift of peace to his disciples was more than an absence of trouble. His peace included the forgiveness of sins and the fullness of everything good.

Basil the Great (329-379 AD), an early church father, explains the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

"The Spirit restores paradise to us and the way to heaven and adoption as children of God; he instills confidence that we may call God truly Father and grants us the grace of Christ to be children of the light and to enjoy eternal glory. In a word, he bestows the fullness of blessings in this world and the next; for we may contemplate now in the mirror of faith the promised things we shall someday enjoy. If this is the foretaste, what must the reality be? If these are the first fruits, what must be the harvest?" (From the treatise by Basil on *The Holy Spirit*)

The Lord Jesus offers each one of us the gift and power of his Holy Spirit. He wants to make our faith strong, give us hope that endures, and a love that never grows cold. He never refuses to give his Spirit to those who ask with expectant faith. Jesus instructed his disciples to ask confidently for the gift of the Spirit: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

- *Do you want power to live a faith-filled life as a disciple of Jesus? Ask the Father to fill you with the power of his Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).*
- *Do you thirst for God and for the abundant life he offers through the gift of his Spirit?*
- *Do you know and experience in your own life the gift and power of the Holy Spirit?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing let us now pray together:

ALL: God our Father, our minds were prepared for the coming of Your kingdom when You took Christ beyond our sight so that we might seek Him in His glory. Make us joyful in His ascension. May we follow where He has led and find our hope in His glory, for He is Lord forever. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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