

Scripture Study

Pentecost Sunday – Cycles ABC



Opening prayer

Acts 2:1-11

(Ps 104:1,24,29-31,34)

Romans 8:22-27

John 20:19-23

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel is a reading that we just heard on the 2nd Sunday of Easter. For this Pentecost Sunday, therefore, we will instead be looking at the First Reading for this Sunday, taken from the Acts of the Apostles.
- The setting is at Jerusalem in the upper room where the Last Supper had been held. It is 10 days after the Ascension, at which time Jesus had left them specific instructions (Acts 1:45). About 120 people, including Mary, were present. It is the time of the Jewish feast of Pentecost.
- Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks (in Hebrew, *Shavout*), was one of three major Jewish pilgrim feasts, celebrated seven weeks after Passover (Deuteronomy 16:16). Devout Jews from all over the known world would be in Jerusalem for these two feasts (verses 9-11). Originally a harvest festival where God's people would offer him the first fruits (best part) of the harvest, it came to be also a commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai on the fiftieth day after the Exodus from Egypt (from the Greek *Petekoste*, meaning "fiftieth").
- Christians now celebrate Pentecost as the "birthday" of the Church, and a celebration of the giving of the New Law of the Spirit written on the hearts of believers (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6) as was promised to the Apostles by Our Lord (John 15:26; 16:13; 20:22, Luke 24:49).

Questions:

- Even though as Christians, we have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (2nd Reading, verse 23). How is it, then, that we are "groaning within ourselves as we are awaiting adoption" [by God]? How do verses 24 through 26 help to answer this?
- What was the original meaning of the Feast of Pentecost for Jews (Deuteronomy 16:9-10)? What theological significance did they add to this feast? Why do you think God chose the Jewish Feast of Pentecost to give the Holy Spirit to the Church? What is the meaning of Pentecost for Christians (Acts 2:32-33; CCC 715)?
- How far have these pilgrims come (verses 9-11)? What attracts them to the disciples? Would you respond more like those in verse 12 or those in verse 13? Why?
- When have you experienced an empowering from God to witness about Christ? How does being filled with the Spirit relate to bearing witness about Christ?
- Have you ever had a strong religious conversion experience? If so, how did your behavior change, and what did your family and friends think about it? What did *you* think about it?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2623, 696, 1287, 715

Closing prayer

Those who are led by the Holy Spirit have true ideas; that is why so many ignorant people are wiser than the learned. The Holy Spirit is light and strength. -St. John Vianney

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"Receive the Holy Spirit!"

Gospel Reading: *John 20:19-23*

New Testament Reading: *Acts 2:1-11*

Meditation: Do you know and experience in your life the gift and power of the Holy Spirit? After his death and resurrection Jesus promised his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Receive the Holy Spirit!* Jesus knew 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*? Just as Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at the beginning of his ministry at the River Jordan, so the disciples needed the anointing of the Spirit to carry out the mission entrusted to them by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is given to all who are baptized into 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 Jesus. The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:26) and enables us to grow in spiritual freedom (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. 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).

Basil the Great, a fourth century church father, wrote on the work of the Holy Spirit: "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, *The Holy Spirit*) Do you thirst for God and for the life of the Spirit within you?

"Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gift of Pentecost and for new life in the Holy Spirit. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and set my heart ablaze with the fire of your love that I may serve you in joy and freedom."

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