

Pentecost - Yr. C  
[Reading I: Acts 2:1-11](#)  
[Responsorial Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34](#)  
[Reading II: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13](#)  
[or Romans 8:8-17](#)  
[Gospel: John 20:19-23 or John 14:15-16, 23b-26](#)  
Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:  
<https://liturgy.slu.edu/PentecostC060522/theword.html>



Descent of the Holy Spirit

Pentecost marks the culmination of the Paschal season. With Lent, we began a preparation to join Jesus in dying and being raised to new life. The journey continued in the Easter season as we integrated more deeply the gift of God's new life into our life. As we celebrate Pentecost, our focus turns to mission that flows from this new life. Our readings are from the Acts of the Apostles, the First Letter to the Corinthians or in year C, there is an option to read from the Letter to the Romans, and two options from the Gospel of John. This is also one of two times a year that there is a sequence on Sunday.

Pentecost comes from the Greek word for fiftieth. It is the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Easter. In Judaism, it was 50 days after Passover and marked in the completion of the spring grain harvest. In religious circles it marked the 50 days that Israelites journeyed out of slavery in Egypt to the encounter with God at Mt. Sinai, and the giving of the commandments. Just as the law was central to the life of Jewish people, the Spirit is central to the life of the Christian community.

As we end the Easter season, our passage from Acts comes from early in the book rather than at the conclusion. On the previous Sundays, we have been reading about how the Apostles lived and acted in the months and years after the resurrection. The question arises, how did they, uneducated fishermen and peasants, enter a new way of living. The answer is the Holy Spirit coming upon them and empowering them to be witnesses and people who continued the ministry of Christ.

Acts describes the coming of the Spirit as a mighty wind. Ruah is the Hebrew word for wind, breathe, or spirit. It is rooted in movement from power. The Ruah moved over the water at the beginning of creation while everything was formless chaos and brought the created world forward as God spoke the Word. Here the disciples have encountered the Word of God in Jesus and the Spirit brings forth a new people by dwelling in them.

Wind, fire, and water are understood as liquids in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, they are spoken of as being poured out. "... when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel says the Lord God." ([Ez 39:29](#)) Tongues of fire brings to mind that God appeared as fire in the burning bush to Moses. It also has power. The Spirit enters them and empowers them to bring God's presence to the world.

" And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. ... we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." What exactly happened when the Apostles spoke is not clear. Were they able to speak in new languages or was the miracle that everyone heard in their own language? It was the work of the Spirit and not that of the Apostles. It may be understood as God reuniting the human family after it became divided at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1 – 9). The work of the Spirit went on to reconnect the Samaritans and the Jewish Christians and bring about a relationship between the Jewish Christians and Gentiles. These were two large divisions in the human family that were bridged by the work of the Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit in the first Gospel option (Jn 20: 19-23) is also presented as enabling a mission of which human hearts were incapable – forgiveness. Jesus breathes (notice breathe!) and says receive the Spirit. Forgive! In both presentations, the disciples are sent to continue the mission of Jesus.

In the second option (Jn 14: 15-16, 23b-26), part of which we heard on the Sixth Sunday of Easter, presents Jesus promise to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with them always. We are not alone on the journey of life; the Spirit is with us always. The Spirit will remind of us of everything that Jesus taught and help us to put it into practice. The Spirit will not be a passive presence but will be leading and empowering us to fulfill the mission of Jesus.

There are also two options for the second reading. The first comes for the First Letter to the Corinthians. The Spirit is at work before we realize it in our lives. The Spirit's work does not stop there. All people share a common heritage through the Spirit and in this unity, each are given gifts to serve others. The different gifts, forms of service, and workings are all expressions of the work that God is doing within and among us.

The second option is from the Letter to the Romans. Paul reflects on the work of the Spirit in uniting us with Jesus through the Paschal Mystery. When the Spirit dwells in us, we too can call God, Abba (Daddy). One can live in the reality that one has a place in God's family for one can be assured that she or he is a child of God. Being a child of God enables one to receive the same fullness of life and glory that belongs to Christ Jesus.

The sequence is a poetic meditation on a key mystery in the Christian experience. Originally connected to the Alleluia verse before the Gospel. They now stand as a reflection between the earlier readings and the Alleluia and Gospel. In centuries past there were several sequences in use. Now, there are two principal sequences that are used on Easter and Pentecost. These are reflective and contemplative to help us gain insight into the great work of God. There are also two optional ones, one for the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ and for Our Lady of Sorrows.

The Pentecost sequence highlights various names for the Spirit and invokes the Spirit to work within minds and hearts to bring forth the reign of God. It can be used as a prayer anytime for guidance and strength.

#### Reflection Questions:

What do the symbols of wind, breathe, and fire convey to you?

When you pray, do you address the Holy Spirit? What names or terms do you use?

How is the Spirit empowering and inviting you to continue the ministry of Jesus?

What gifts have you been given to minister to others and build up the Body of Christ?

How do you see yourself united with other people from diverse backgrounds and origins by the Spirit?

What does the Spirit's presence mean to you for your life?

## Themes

Holy Spirit

Gifts of the Spirit

Unity of the human family

Continuing the ministry of Jesus

## Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may recognize and use all the gifts that God has given us for the good of others and the fulfillment of the mission of Jesus

For a flourishing of the fruits of the Spirit: that we may manifest love, joy, peace, patience, and all the fruits of the Spirit in our lives

For a renewed sense of mission: that the Spirit will inspire us in confronting the watered-down values of society and in building a society of justice and peace

For Christian Unity: that the Spirit will heal the wounds and misunderstandings that divide the Body of Christ and lead us in offering a common proclamation of the Gospel

For a Spirit of forgiveness: that God will break the bonds of resentment and vengeance that hold our hearts and free us to forgive as God has forgiven us

For conversion of hearts: that God will break the anger and violence that grips hearts, bring an end to violence, and reveal new ways to resolve hurts and differences