

# Scripture Study

Pentecost Sunday – Cycle B



## Opening prayer

**Acts 2:1-11**

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

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

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:

- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, if the "Body of Christ" is not simply a metaphor, what is it? (see 1 Corinthians 10:17; CCC 790) What does the Holy Spirit do in the Body? (see CCC 797) How does union with Christ affect social and ethnic differences? (see Galatians 3:28; CCC 1267)
- 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: §§ 687-690, 730, 733-741, 1695**

## Closing prayer

*We do not exist in order to pursue just any happiness. We have been called to penetrate the intimacy of God's own life, to know and love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and to love also--in that same love of the one God in three divine Persons--the angels and all men. --St. Josemaria Escriva*

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "Receive the Holy Spirit!"

**Meditation:** Do you know and experience in your life the gift and power of the Holy Spirit? 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 fulness 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 (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 thirst for God and for the abundant life he offers through the gift of his Spirit?**

*“Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gift of Pentecost and for the new life you offer 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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