

PENTECOST

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We call **Pentecost** the birthday of the Church. On this day the ascended Jesus sent the promised “Advocate” by pouring the Holy Spirit on his disciples (*John 16:7*).

Filling the house with a sound of wind, the Spirit energized the disciples, showing them the meaning of the Old Testament and how Jesus’ life and death fulfilled it. Just as important, the Spirit empowered them for their mission, baptizing them with power to bring this truth to all the people of the world.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Throughout Scripture the Holy Spirit is both a gift of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus himself.

In the New Testament, this Spirit of God descended on Jesus at his baptism (*Matthew 3:16*). On Pentecost the Spirit descended on Jesus’ followers to give them power, as he had promised (*Luke 24:49*).

In the Book of Acts, the Spirit that guided the apostles was called “the Spirit of Jesus.”

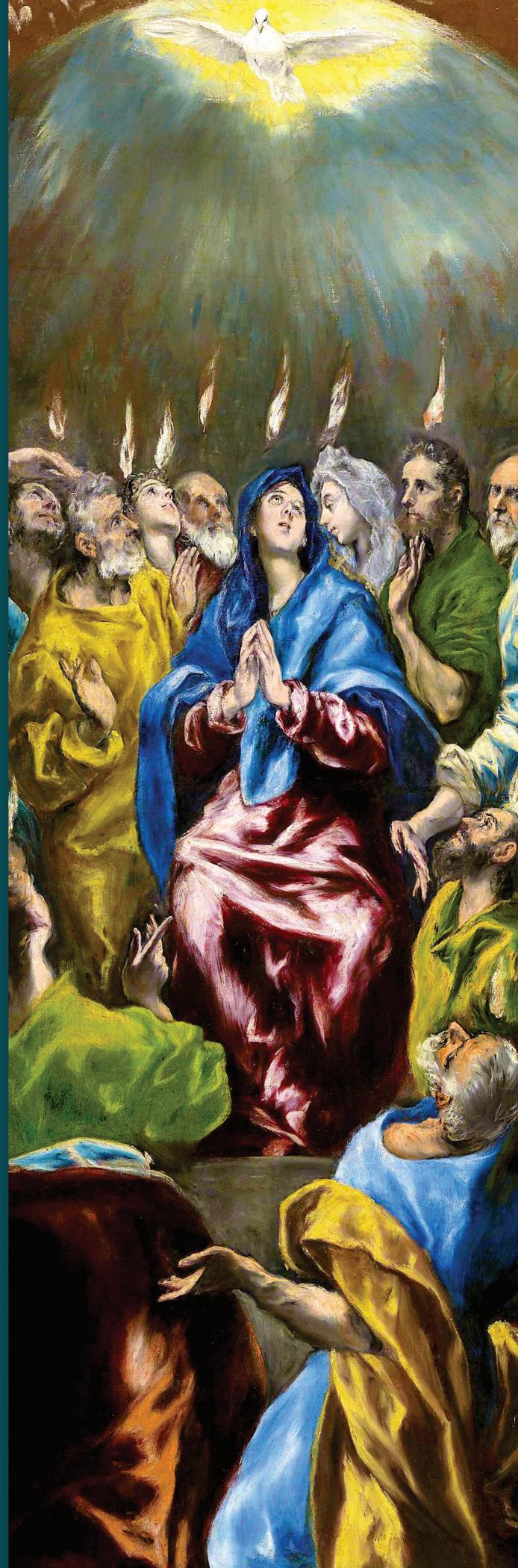
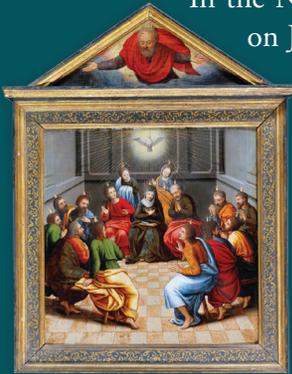
Peter called the Day of Pentecost the realization of Joel’s prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit (*Acts 2:16-21*)—a gift promised not only to the Pentecost disciples, but “for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (*Acts 2:39*).

The Fulfillment of Easter

The Day of Pentecost completes the Easter Season because, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to understand the meaning of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection. The end of the Easter Season opens the door to the liturgical *Season of Ordinary Time*—the period from Pentecost Sunday to the First Sunday in Advent.

Historically, Pentecost, (meaning 50th day) is a Christian festival with Jewish roots. For Jews, Pentecost was also called the *Feast of Weeks*, celebrating the end of the grain harvest. The Jewish Pentecost also celebrated the giving of the Law and the founding of the Jewish faith community.

Early Christians gave thanks in their Pentecost for the fruits of the Spirit, as well as the founding of the Church, the successor to the Old Testament community.



Come Holy Spirit

Veni Sancte Spiritus, (“Come Holy Spirit”) sometimes called the “Golden Sequence,” is the sequence for the Mass for Pentecost. The hymn has been attributed to three different authors, King Robert II the Pious of France (970–1031), Pope Innocent III (1161–1216), and Stephen Langton (d 1228), Archbishop of Canterbury although it has been attributed to others as well. Originally composed in Latin, the following is the one typically heard at Mass.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!

Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.

You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul’s most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;

In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.

O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!

Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;

Give them virtue’s sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end. Amen.
Alleluia.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are of two kinds: communal and personal. The Spirit gives gifts to help build up the community of the faithful, gifts that are described in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12: *speaking wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues and the interpretation of tongues*. In general, these gifts help strengthen the community in faith, hope and love.

The personal gifts of the Holy Spirit, traditionally seven in number and based on the book of the prophet Isaiah 11:1-2, help an individual live the life of a disciple. They are: *wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord*.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

St. Paul also describes the fruits of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. To that list, Catholics often add “*goodness, modesty and chastity*,” based on the Latin *Vulgate* translation by St. Jerome. The fruits of the Holy Spirit will become more evident in our lives as we consent to the Spirit’s action within us.



History & Customs of Pentecost

St. Paul celebrated Passover/Easter with the Philippians, then hurried to keep Pentecost in Jerusalem (*Acts 20:6, 16*).

In the early centuries of the western Church, Pentecost was another opportunity for those who were not able to be baptized on Easter. Baptisms took place at the Saturday vigil of Pentecost and included many of the same lessons and prayers as at Easter.

In the Middle Ages, a variety of local customs developed around Pentecost. Roses were dropped from the rafters to simulate the tongues of fire. Trumpets were sounded to recall the sound of the mighty rushing wind. Most widespread was the use of a dove or pigeon to represent the Holy Spirit. A live dove was set free to fly around inside the church or a carved one was let down by a rope from the roof. Pentecost partying became widespread in England and Germany and, later, among the slaves and white settlers of the eastern colonies of America.

“Ordinary Time,” the period between Pentecost and the first Sunday of Advent, celebrates each Sunday as a “little Easter,” commemorating Jesus’ Resurrection. Another focus of this period is the Church as it grows in faith and virtue through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As a people formed by Christ’s victory over death and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Church applies the mysteries of faith to our daily lives.