

PENTECOST SUNDAY

May 31, 2020 A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful gathered in your name. Enkindle in us the fire of your divine love. Allow your dormant gifts within us to manifest themselves in our lives so that all will know your presence and activity in our lives. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: The first and third readings speak of the Holy Spirit's coming. The second reading tells us that the Holy Spirit grants the Church a diversity of gifts.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1-11

Luke situates the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. In John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit comes on Easter Sunday evening. In Scripture, it is the *theological* meaning of events that matters and not their *historical chronology*.

In Jewish tradition, *Pentecost* is a harvest feast celebrating the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Pentecost commemorates Israel's covenant with God, the birth of Israel. *Pentecost* (meaning fifty) takes place 50 days after Passover.

Luke has the Holy Spirit coming on Pentecost to announce the beginning of a new Israel. The Church will be *universal* in scope. People of *every* nation will be invited to join this new People of God.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit is described in both visual and auditory terms, reminiscent of the Old Testament theophanies, i.e., appearances of God. God appears to Moses in a burning bush and God speaks to Job from a whirlwind (Job 38:1). The first gift the Spirit imparts is the gift of *tongues*. Perhaps the most miraculous thing about this whole event is the *inner change* it works in the disciples. A group of fear-filled disciples now become bold proclaimers of the Gospel.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 104

This is a hymn of praise to the Creator God—the One who gives us new life in the Spirit.

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

Paul makes two important points in these verses. First, all the gifts come from the *same* Spirit. This *One* Spirit is the *unifying* factor in a community in which the *many* gifts are threatening to create chaos. Second, the gifts are given for the *common good* and not for one's self-aggrandizement.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: John 20:19-23

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: John 20:19-23

*"On the evening of that first day of the week...Jesus came." This appearance happens on Easter Sunday evening, the evening of the Resurrection. Jesus comes to a group of frightened disciples ("the doors were locked for fear of the Jews"). The fact that Jesus can enter through locked doors shows that "resurrected life" is totally different, not confined by physical obstacles. Yet, by showing them "his hands and his side," Jesus is saying that there is a *connection* and*

continuity between the crucified Christ and the resurrected Christ. Also, by showing them his pierced hands and side, Jesus is communicating the *cost* of glory.

Jesus imparts three gifts: *peace, joy* and the *spirit*. The “*peace*” or *shalom* which Jesus brings replaces the feelings of guilt the disciples must have had for abandoning Jesus in his hour of greatest need. The gift of *peace* or *shalom* restores harmony to a broken or wounded relationship. *Joy* is what the disciples experience when they see Jesus. This joy at the presence of Jesus replaces the feelings of depression the disciples must have suffered during Jesus’ absence. Then Jesus imparts his spirit: “*He breathed on them.*” This gesture is seen as reminiscent of God breathing the breath of life into Adam (Gen 2:7). Pentecost is the beginning of a new creation. By his gesture of breathing, Jesus brings to birth his Church. Then Jesus commissions those gathered to go forth and forgive sins. “*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them and whose sins you retain are retained.*” Originally, these words were probably seen as the Church’s prerogative to confer or withhold Baptism from those seeking entry into the Church. People who were judged as not truly repentant of their sins or not embracing the message of Jesus were refused Baptism which, among other things, cleansed the recipient of sin. Later, our Church saw in these words of Jesus, the foundation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or draws you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. Who is the Holy Spirit to you? If you have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, how did it begin and develop?

3. What gift of the Holy Spirit do you most desire or need at this time in your life?

4. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit’s *presence* and *activity* in your life?

5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: This week, spend some time reflecting on how God has empowered you to do some working our Church or world. If you don’t experience the Holy Spirit’s *presence and activity* in your life, consider speaking with a priest or spiritual guide about this important matter.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God’s Word and listened to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: “*Thank you Holy Spirit for your heavenly presence in my soul. Help me to be more attentive and responsive to your presence.*”

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Breathe On Me, O God

*Breathe on me, breath of God,
Fill me with the life anew,
That I may love the things you love,
And do what you would do.*

*Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with you I have one will,
To live and to endure.*

*Breathe on me, breath of god,
My soul with grace refine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with your fire divine.*

*Breathe on me, breath of God,
So I shall never die,
But live with you the perfect life
In your eternity.*

-Liturgy of the Hours