

Bible Study

The Solemnity of Pentecost, cycle C

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be recreated, and you will renew the face of the earth. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. Which of the gifts of the Holy Spirit do you think you used most often: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, right judgment (counsel), courage (fortitude), reverence (piety), or wonder and awe (fear of the Lord)?
2. Give an example of how you have experienced the Holy Spirit working in you or through you recently?

Commentary before the First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

Pentecost was a Jewish feast long before it was a Christian one. Also called Shavu’ot, it celebrated the gift of the Jewish Law, the Ten Commandments and other guidelines which were given by God on Mount Sinai. They are found in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. That is why Jews from many nations were gathered in Jerusalem on that day. The new Pentecost celebrates God’s gift of the Divine Self, God’s own Spirit in a new law of love. The Law of Love commands us to live as God Himself did in the person of Jesus.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. In which city had the disciples gathered “all in one place together”?
2. Go back a few verses to Chapter 1:15; approximately how many people were gathered together there?
3. So, then, which ones received the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost? (This is very important!)
4. What similarities do you see between this scene and those in Exodus 19:16-20 or Isaiah 66:15 and 18?
5. What is the symbolic meaning of each person in the city being able to hear the Good News about Jesus in his/her own language (even though Saint Peter was only speaking in Aramaic)?

Commentary before the Second Reading: Romans 8:8-17

There are 2 options for the Second Reading of this Solemnity; this is the second option. We will reflect on the first option next year. In his letters Saint Paul frequently wrote about the difference between living “in the flesh” – that is, following the desires and instincts of the body - and ‘living in the spirit.’ His meaning was that once we are converted to God and baptized in Christ, we should be so connected to the Lord that we choose to act only according to the desires of God’s Holy Spirit.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. If God made our bodies, why is it impossible to please God by doing what our desires and instincts desire?
2. What did Saint Paul mean when he wrote “the body is dead because of sin”? (a hint is in verse 13)
3. How does the Holy Spirit actually help us to “live in the spirit”?
4. “Children imitate their parents.” Apply that adage to this reading.
5. As “heirs of God,” what do we stand to inherit?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: John 14:15-16, 23b-26

This reflection is also based on the second of the two options for the Gospel on this day. The reading is taken from Jesus’ discourse to his disciples at the Last Supper. Judas has left and Jesus has been speaking about his new commandment of loving the way God loves. He also has foretold his death and promised to prepare a place for his disciples in heaven. His promise not abandon them was fulfilled when He sent an Advocate on Pentecost.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Do you have a favorite line in this reading? Speak it.
2. What does an advocate do? Explain, then, why that is an appropriate name for the Holy Spirit.
3. Verse 23 does not mean that God will not love us if we do not obey the commandments; God’s love is unconditional and unending. Connect the phrases at the beginning and the end of the sentence to state Jesus’ teaching about our loving God in return. This is his point.
4. What are the two roles of the Holy Spirit that are set forth in this reading?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. We receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism and begin to experience God's working in our lives. Then we receive the fullness of the Spirit's gifts in Confirmation. Do you recall an awareness of a fuller presence of the Holy Spirit after your Confirmation?
2. How does the Holy Spirit "advocate" for you in your daily course of life?
3. We all have an on-going battle within ourselves against temptation (the "flesh"). How can the Holy Spirit help you with that battle?
4. When do you find it especially difficult to win that battle?
5. In general, do you find that God's commands free you to live life more freely and fully, or do you feel that they somehow limit your experience of life? Comment please.
6. And, how do you think God *intended* the commandments to serve us?
7. Do you have abilities that you would like to share with the parish or the community to a greater extent?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, when you had ascended to your rightful throne on high, you fulfilled your promise to send your Holy Spirit, so that you might continue to assist us on our own journey to heaven. Guard within us the fire of your Holy Spirit so that we might be faithful witnesses to you in every situation and at every opportunity. For you are Lord forever and ever. Amen. (Sign of the Cross)