

Readings and commentary Pentecost Year A

Celebration Summary: by Glenn CJ Byer, MA SLD: Like the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, the new Lectionary gives some options for this day in the various years of the three-year cycle of readings.

In all years we hear the wonderful reading from the Acts of the Apostles, which describes how people from all over the known world, from Parthia, Media and Elam (current Iran and parts of places as far away as Azarbaijan, Afghanistan and Pakistan), Mesopotamia (Iraq), Judea (with Galilee made up Israel) Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia (Asia minor) Egypt, Libya (North Africa), Rome. The Greeks get added to the procession of nations in the first option in all years for the second reading, where we are all called to be baptized and so share in the one Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is one of the few days left in the liturgical calendar that calls for the use of the Sequence. The Sequence is a poetic text, designed to be sung, which prepares us to better hear the message that we know is coming, the message of the Gospel.

The Gospel for Pentecost is taken from the Gospel of John. It is the scene from Easter evening, when Jesus bestows the Holy Spirit.

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First Reading Acts 2:1-11

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky

a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven
staying in Jerusalem.
At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd,
but they were confused
because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
They were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
"Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?
Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?
We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,
inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene,
as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs,
yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues
of the mighty acts of God."

The word of the Lord

Commentary Acts 2:1-11 by John Paul Heil: Main Theme:
The gift of the SPIRIT enables us to COMMUNICATE the
mighty acts of God.

Since the Jewish feast of Pentecost was a pilgrimage feast
celebrating the harvest and commemorating the gift of the
Torah fifty days (meaning of "pentecost") after the Passover
feast, "there were devout Jews from every nation under
heaven staying in Jerusalem." The "strong driving wind" is
an apt symbol of the Spirit, since the word for "wind" and
"spirit" are the same in Greek (pneuma). And the
appearance of the "tongues of fire" appropriately
characterizes the Spirit's ability to enable the apostles to
communicate in "different tongues." That the large crowd
"were confused because each one heard them speaking in

his own language” reverses the outcome of the story about the tower of Babel in Genesis 11, in which everyone was “confused” (meaning of “babel”) because they could not understand one another speaking in different languages. This inability of human beings to communicate with one another leads to the disunity and divisions among them. But the Spirit given to the apostles at this Pentecost feast and to us at our Baptism and Confirmation enables us to communicate “the mighty acts of God” as a way of uniting and overcoming our differences with the various language and ethnic groups throughout the world.

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Responsorial Psalm Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

✠(cf. 30) Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O LORD!
The earth is full of your creatures.

If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in his works!
Pleasing to him be my theme;
I will be glad in the LORD.

Commentary Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34: by Deacon Owen Cummings: Psalm 104 was the first response to the readings in the Liturgy of the Word of the Easter Vigil. The response today is the same as the response at Easter: "Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth."

There God's creation was celebrated, with an emphasis on

the waters as expressive of God's creative power, of God's ruach/Spirit. At Pentecost, the emphasis turns to God's ruach/Spirit, renewing the face of the earth. The Holy Breath of God: - brings cosmos out of chaos at creation (Genesis 1), becomes the life-source of the human race in Adam, brings the dry bones of the people from death to life in Ezekiel, is the principle of the Jesus-event (the Annunciation), and hands over his Spirit on the Cross on Good Friday (John 19: 30). Today we ask God's Spirit to renew us to continue his holy work, in the "ordinary time" of our lives until its consummation at the Parousia.

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

In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;
there are different workings but the same God
who produces all of them in everyone.

To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit
is given for some benefit.

As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body,
so also Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,
and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

The word of the Lord

Commentary 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 by Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.: Paul begins with expounding upon the criterion for discerning the origin of the utterances expressed by the faithful while in an uplifted or ecstatic state, i.e., if these articulations are under the impulse of the Spirit or, else, are symptomatic of a counterfeit in imitation of the excesses found within the pagan cults. Quite simply, the determination is to be based on the doctrinal content of the exclamations and, particularly, their Christological implications.

He now spells out the sole origin of these charisms in order to give to the Corinthians an idea of their equality and, thereby, Paul proposes to impede any exaggerated esteem for any single gift operative within the individual. Furthermore, it is imperative to comprehend that the charisms that are then, immediately, enumerated are all manifestations of the Holy Spirit and his actions, given to each disciple, solely and expressly intended for their usefulness within and by the Church.

The Body of Christ is one, conserving its unity while in the process of associating and joining many faithful to it because it is Christ who confers this unanimity upon the Church as he has given the same, unique Spirit to all, above-all within Baptism when we were sanctified and purified. All of us belong to the sole Body of Christ and, within a second effusion of his Spirit, following Baptism, that probably refers to Confirmation and the Eucharist, Paul specifies that we have further imbibed of the Spirit who permits us to draw ever closer to Christ.

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Sequence

Veni, Sancte Spiritus

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.

Gospel Acclamation

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Gospel John 20:19-23

As the Father sent me, so I send you: Receive the Holy Spirit

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

The Gospel of the Lord

Lectionary for Mass in the Dioceses of the United States of America, volume I Copyright © 1970, 1997, 1998 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

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Commentary John 20:19-23 by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB:

The mood among the disciples following the death of Jesus was that of fear. If Jesus had been killed, certainly they would be next. Having barricaded themselves behind locked doors, amazingly the risen Lord appeared to them and offered them his peace (Jn 20:19). Jesus penetrates their fear with his peace. Peace bespeaks wholeness and completeness. Peace is a gift Jesus can now give the disciples precisely because of his resurrection which is his own wholeness and completeness of mission.

Jesus verifies his real presence by showing the disciples his real wounds. The disciples in a sense are able to see through the wounds and recognize Jesus as the risen Lord (Jn 20:20). Jesus reaffirms his gift of peace to the disciples and follows this with a commissioning. Just as God had sent Jesus, so now Jesus sends his disciples. This commissioning makes them officially apostles, "those who are sent" (Jn 20:21). These newly commissioned disciples are then

empowered by Jesus as he breathes on them the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22). They are now fully empowered to do the works that Jesus did.

The final aspect of this commissioning is the power to forgive sins (Jn 20:23). In John's gospel sin is ignorance of God's presence in the world in and through Jesus. Here forgiving sin is equal to erasing that ignorance by making God known in the world. Doing this confronts the world with decision and judgment. The world will respond either for Jesus or against him.