

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

John 20:19-23

In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you', and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

Unlike the Acts of the Apostles, St John reports that it was in the 'evening of the first day of the week', the day of resurrection, that the Risen Lord appeared to his disciples and 'breathed his Spirit' on them (Jn 20). We call to mind the story of creation, how the Creator breathed life into the first man (Gen 2:7), so now the Risen Christ, breathes on his disciples, giving them the Spirit of new life.

The Spirit doesn't just reveal and teach us about God's love, but it actually draws us into the cycle of the Father's love for the Son, and the Son's love for the Father. The Spirit enables the Father and the Son to come and live in us, and for us to live in God.

Let us welcome the Holy Spirit and rejoice in our new life in God.

Prayer over the Offerings

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that, as promised by your Son, the Holy Spirit may reveal to us more abundantly the hidden mystery of this sacrifice and graciously lead us into all truth.

Prayer after Communion

O God, who bestow heavenly gifts upon your Church, safeguard, we pray, the grace you have given, that the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon her may retain all its force and that this spiritual food may gain her abundance of eternal redemption.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Year B

23rd May 2021

Witnesses of Christ with the Holy Spirit



“For I think it is true to say that, while Christ was still present in bodily form among those who believed in him, he was revealed to them as one who conferred every good gift; but since the time and the need were now calling him to be carried up to his Father in heaven, it was necessary for him to be present through the Spirit with those who worshiped him, and to dwell in our hearts through faith. Having him within us in this way, we would be able to cry out in confidence: ‘ABBA! Father!’, and to make peaceful progress towards every virtue; we would prove powerful and invincible against the wiles of the devil and the attacks of men, for we would possess the Spirit whose power has no limit.”

St Cyril of Alexandria

Opening Prayer

O God, who by the mystery of today’s great feast sanctify your whole Church in every people and nation, pour out, we pray, the gifts of the Holy Spirit across the face of the earth and, with the divine grace that was at work when the Gospel was first proclaimed, fill now once more the hearts of believers.

Acts 2:1-11

When Pentecost day came round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

As the name indicates, Pentecost is the feast that takes place 50 days after Easter. But Pentecost was also celebrated in the Old Testament, among the Jewish people. It was called the feast of Harvest or the feast of Week's, and it celebrated the beginning of harvest, but it later came to signify the commemoration of all the covenants, beginning with Noah to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. By emphasizing Pentecost, Luke clearly wants to show, that the out pouring of the Holy Spirit is the solemn promulgation of the New Covenant, the birth of the Church.

Psalm 103(104):1, 24, 29-31, 34

*Bless the Lord, my soul! Lord God, how great you are,
How many are your works, O Lord! The earth is full of your riches.*

*You take back your spirit, they die, returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth.*

*May the glory of the Lord last for ever! May the Lord rejoice in his works!
May my thoughts be pleasing to him. I find my joy in the Lord.*

Galatians 5:16-25

If you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing, and it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not always carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you. When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility; idolatry and sorcery; feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy; drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course. You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit.

Written around the year 50 AD. Paul has been very successful in preaching the Gospel to the Galatians and many have become believers. But then there follows, certain Jewish converts, who claim that Paul has watered down the Gospel, thus making it more appealing, by omitting the obligation to the Jewish Law, especially circumcision. Paul is furious and argues that we are not saved by external acts or keeping the Law, but through God's free gift. He calls on his listeners, to live under the guidance of the Spirit. The Spirit leads us from self-indulgent love and places Christ as our standard: 'is is no longer I who live, but he who lives in me'.

