

## Pentecost Sunday, Year C, Catechist

Submitted by lectionaryadmin on Thu, 04/11/2013 - 20:00

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Acts 2:1-11

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

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

John 20:19-23

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

## The Word In Liturgy

Today's feast of Pentecost celebrates the sending of the Spirit upon the church. It is the last Sunday of Easter, and brings the season to a close. The liturgical year honors the chronology of Luke by placing our celebration of the Spirit's descent fifty days after the Resurrection. The Christian Pentecost in Luke coincides with the Jewish feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover, which was a festival of the harvest, and later became a commemoration of the giving of the Law. Against this background, Luke's presentation of the Pentecost event calls our attention both to the way in which the descent of the Spirit resembles the theophany at Mount Sinai (fire, sound, and word), and to the effects of Pentecost as the "harvest" of the Paschal Mystery.

The liturgy does not bind itself to Luke's chronological unfolding of the events of Easter in every respect, however. All the readings from Acts that have been proclaimed in previous Sundays of the Easter season are about events that took place *after* Pentecost. In other words, the effects of Pentecost have been the subject of our reflection and our celebration throughout the fifty days of Easter. In today's gospel passage from John, read every year on Pentecost, Jesus gives the Spirit on the evening of Easter day itself. Thus, in a certain sense, the liturgy draws the whole fifty days of Easter into one.

The first reading tells in very few words the story of the Spirit's descent and how it was manifested: a loud sound (like wind), tongues (like fire) coming to rest on each disciple, and bold proclamation of the Good News thereafter by the disciples. Glossolalia, a form of ecstatic speech-like babbling known in the ancient world and attested to in the New Testament, here is presented as intelligible speech, understood by listeners from around the world as communication in their own languages. By naming the geographic origins of all the Diaspora Jews living in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost, Luke paints a vivid symbolic picture of the worldwide proclamation of God's great works.

The Gospel passage, introduced by the description of the disciples gathered in fear behind locked

doors, draws our attention to the reversal of their fear to joy and their transformation from frightened followers to apostolic witnesses (“apostle” means “one sent”). At the heart of this change is the presence of the risen Lord, the command to go forth, and the giving of the Spirit. In a gesture that recalls God’s act of creation, Jesus gives the Spirit by the action of breathing on the disciples. His imparting of the Spirit is from his own wounded and risen body. The giving of the Spirit is thus a new act of creation, by the crucified and glorified Christ. Last of all, as in Luke’s gospel, reconciliation is central to the mission entrusted to them and enabled by the Spirit.

## Catholic Doctrine

### **The gifts of the Spirit and the Sacrament of Confirmation**

On this Sunday, which closes the fifty days of the Easter Season, the conferral of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered apostles and Mary is celebrated by the Church. The Sacrament of Confirmation perpetuates this grace by which new members of the Church, in the context of their initiation journey, are sealed with the gift of the Spirit. The purpose of this sealing is to strengthen them so they may witness to Christ (as did the first apostles). This faithful witness builds up the body of Christ in love. Catholic teaching emphasizes that just as those who are baptized, those confirmed are so marked with the special character or seal of the Lord that this sacrament cannot be repeated (Rite of Confirmation, 2).

There are, admittedly, differing practices within the Catholic Church in the timing or sequence of celebrating this sacrament of initiation. But whenever this sacrament is celebrated, it completes baptismal grace (CCC 1285).

The Spirit is received at Baptism. Subsequently, one is strengthened in the Gifts of the Spirit at Confirmation, and is thereby enriched for the task of witnessing to the faith, and is more closely bound to Christ.

Both the Old and New Testaments refer to the Spirit. The Spirit is described as descending upon Jesus, the Messiah, at his own baptism in the Jordan by John. But the fullness of the Holy Spirit was not meant for only the Messiah but for the entire people claimed for God by Jesus. More than once, Jesus promised that this outpouring of the Spirit would be the gift he would send to his Church.

In the early history of the Church, the laying on of hands was recognized as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation. An anointing with chrism (perfumed oil) on the forehead was soon added to the laying on of hands. A “Christian” is one who is “anointed.”

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