



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Pentecost Sunday, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

Acts 2:1-11

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

1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages 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.

## 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 time of prayer for a good 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

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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 Holy Spirit***

The Holy Spirit in Catholic doctrine is the third person of the Trinity. Both Hebrew and Christian scriptures bear witness to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit by many names, such as "Spirit of God," "Breath of God," "Paraclete," and "Advocate." As the Church developed its understanding of the Trinity, it clarified the existence of the divine third person, called the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. This teaching is proclaimed every Sunday by Catholics who gather to celebrate the Eucharist: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets" (*Roman Missal*, Profession of Faith).

The Holy Spirit mediates the continuing presence of Jesus in the Church and in the world. To be in contact with Christ means that the believer must first be moved or under the influence of the Spirit (CCC 683). Thus, the Holy Spirit kindles faith in the hearts of those who are moved to confess their belief in Jesus.

The work of the Spirit can be characterized in two ways: as sustainer and as surprise. In the first instance, the Holy Spirit can be understood as the sustaining presence of God in our



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individual lives and in the life of the Church. The Spirit thus gives the gifts of healing, unity, and love (Paul's letters). The Spirit is the architect of the Church and a guide to those who pray (Luke-Acts). The Spirit is also the teacher and advocate (John's gospel). The Spirit is the animating breath of liturgy and sacramental life. And yet, in the second instance, the Holy Spirit can also be understood as a source of discontinuity and surprise. Scripture refers to tongues of fire and the driving wind of Pentecost which shook the apostles and changed them. Jesus cast out demons by means of the power of the Spirit (Mark's Gospel). New and sometimes very radical movements throughout the history of the Church have claimed a basis in the Holy Spirit.

