

Pentecost Sunday (Mass During the Day, Year C)

Acts 2:1-11—Pentecost and the Descent of the Holy Spirit

1. Pentecost: Greek for “fiftieth [day]” (cf. 2 Macc 12:32; Josephus, *War*, 6.299)
 - a. Jewish “Feast of Weeks” (Hebrew *Shebuoth*) (7 Weeks after Passover)
 - b. Spring harvest festival: offering of “the sheaf” (Lev 23:15-21)
 - c. Memorial: “the day on which the Torah was given” (b. *Pesahim* 68b)
2. Moses and the Israelites Receive the 10 Commandments at Mount Sinai:

On the morning of the third day there were *thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain...* Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God... *And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire...* (Exodus 19:16-18; 20:1-2)

3. The “Holy Spirit”: descends in “tongues of fire” (cf. Isa 5:24)
4. Other Tongues:
 - a. Known languages = “own native language (*idia dialketō*)” (Acts 2:8)
 - b. Not the same as ‘speaking in tongues’ in Paul (cf. 1 Cor 14:6-19)

Psalm 104—Lord, Send Forth Your Spirit, and Renew the Face of the Earth

1. Prayer for God to send forth his “spirit/breath/wind” (Hebrew *ruach*) (104:30)

1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13—Different Spiritual Gifts, but One Spirit

1. Spiritual Gifts: “varieties of gifts (*charisma*), but the same Spirit (*pneuma*)” (12:4)

John 20:19-23—Jesus Breathes on the Apostles: “Receive the Holy Spirit”

1. Jesus “breathes” on the Apostles (cf. Gen 2:7) (20:22)
2. “Receive the Holy Spirit (*pneuma hagion*)” (20:22)
3. Jesus sends the disciples on Mission:

From this hour onward, the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (CCC 730)

Living Tradition: The Tongues of Fire

Now the Holy Spirit appeared *in fire and in tongues because all those whom he fills he makes simultaneously to burn and to speak—to burn because of him and to speak about him*. And at the same time he indicated that the holy churchy, when it had spread to the ends of the earth, was to speak in the languages of all nations. (Venerable Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 2.3A; trans. in F. Martin, 2006, 22).

The Catechism on Pentecost and Confirmation

It is evident from its celebration that the effect of *the sacrament of Confirmation is the*

special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost... It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to *spread* and *defend* the faith by word and action as *true witnesses of Christ*, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross (CCC 1302, 1303)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (Pentecost Sunday, Year B)

1. What was the Jewish feast of “Pentecost”? When was it celebrated, and what was it a memorial of in Jewish tradition? (cf. Leviticus 23).

2. What is the significance of Jesus’ “breathing” on the disciples and sending them on mission?

3. What is the connection between what happens on the feast of Pentecost and the sacrament of Confirmation (cf. CCC 1302-1304)?

For Further Study

1. Francis Martin, *Acts* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament V; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 22. A wonderful collection of ancient Christian interpretations of Acts and the mystery of Pentecost.
2. William J. Kurz, S.J. *Acts of the Apostles* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014). An excellent commentary on Acts from a Catholic perspective. Very informative.