

Pentecost, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples:

'If you love me you will keep my commandments.
I shall ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate
to be with you for ever.

'If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we shall come to him and make our home with him.
Those who do not love me do not keep my words.
And my word is not my own:
it is the word of the one who sent me.
I have said these things to you while still with you;
but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything
and remind you of all I have said to you.

(John 14:15-16, 23-26)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival, celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was one of the great pilgrimage festivals of the Jews, and this is why so many pilgrims were present in Jerusalem on the day when the Spirit was manifested in the lives of the disciples.
- The Christian feast of Pentecost is fifty days after Easter and is the culmination of the Lent-Easter-Pentecost cycle.
- The Church teaches that the Holy Spirit brings both gifts and fruits to the faithful (see *Sharing the Tradition*).
- Pentecost Sunday was often known as Whit Sunday or Whitsun, especially in England.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The Christian imperative to love as Jesus loved is again at the centre of the gospel. To love God and therefore to love the Son can be shown by keeping the commandments that Jesus gave—that is to say, by living life as a Christian should. To help in this task, Jesus promises to send the Advocate, the one who will teach and constantly remind the followers of Jesus of all that has been said to them.

- What are the demands of living as Christ has taught us?

The first reading of the Pentecost Mass tells the story of the events on that fateful day in Jerusalem.

- Read the text from the Acts of the Apostles together.

One of the things that is emphasised is that when 'they were filled' with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to overcome barriers and divisions and to 'preach about the marvels of God' to people from all parts of the world.

- In what ways does the Spirit continue to enable the disciples of Jesus to do just that, even in our own time?
- Invite those present to reflect on their own baptism, when they too received the Holy Spirit. What does this mean for them now?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'If you love me you will keep my commandments.' What are the commandments that Jesus gave? How easy or difficult is it for you to keep them and live them?
- 'The Advocate ... will teach you everything and remind you of all that I said to you.' How open are you to seeing the action of the Holy Spirit in the world around you?
- Recall someone you no longer see but who had a significant influence on shaping who you are; someone whose memory is alive for you and whose influence remains strong. Share your recollections of this person. Does this phenomenon give insight into the experience of the disciples at Pentecost?
- Spend some time this week thinking about the gifts of the Spirit that you can discern in yourself. Try to recognise and affirm the gifts of others this week, and use one of your own gifts to make life a little easier for someone else.
- Use today's gospel acclamation as your prayer this week:

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

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God’s word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

Coming to faith is not so much acquiring a new set of beliefs about God as it is discovering God’s existence within the realities of our daily lives. The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit help us to be more attuned to the actions of God in our lives and in our world. At baptism, the Spirit comes upon the newly initiated Christian, and at confirmation, the Spirit of God is renewed and confirmed in the faithful.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), fortitude (courage), knowledge, piety (reverence) and fear (awe) of the Lord (CCC, §1831).

The Church lists twelve fruits of the Spirit: charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity (CCC, §1832).

- Explore these gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. How do you see them manifested in yourself and others? In what ways do we need to cultivate these gifts and fruits? How are you called to use these gifts and fruits?

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

Red is the colour that is often associated with the Spirit, and red vestments are worn by the priest on Pentecost Sunday. Red symbolises the intense love or ‘fire’ of the Holy Spirit. Other symbols of the Spirit are tongues of flame, wind and a white dove. All have their origins in Scripture. Each of these conveys something of the mystery of the Spirit of God, which is beyond human understanding.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- In what ways are the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit made manifest in your community and to the wider community? How can these gifts and fruits be strengthened still further?
- Use the symbols of the Holy Spirit as a focus for prayer: the colour red, small flames, a representation of a dove. Pray for the world and for the Church. Pray that the Spirit will live in each of you. A suitable song could be ‘Gifts of the Spirit’ (GA 183). Conclude with the prayer at the laying on of hands from the rite of confirmation in the RCIA at §228.

NOTES

Series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.