

Pentecost, Year A

GOSPEL

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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.'

(John 20:19-23)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival that was celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It was one of the great 'pilgrimage' festivals, which meant that people came to celebrate this feast at the temple. It was for this festival that 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).

EXPLORING THE WORD

Despite the promise of Jesus that he would not leave his disciples 'orphaned' (see sixth Sunday of Easter), they huddle in fear in the upper room after his death. He comes among them, not offering recriminations at their lack of faith, but offering peace—a peace won through the cross and resurrection. Just as Jesus is transformed by this experience, so too the disciples' fear turns to joy. In the giving of his Spirit, Jesus literally breathes life back into the disciples. They are to go out and continue his work of forgiveness, judgment and witness in the world.

- What kind of experiences animate you and 'bring you to life', giving you energy to keep on with the task?
- What gifts can be discerned among members of the group?
- How are these gifts used by each one?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Recall a time when you felt filled with joy.
- Relive your feelings when you first received the Holy Spirit at baptism.
- How do you feel about being 'sent' into the world?
- Recall someone you no longer see but who had a significant influence on shaping who you are, whose memory is alive for you and whose influence remains strong. Share your recollections of these people. Does this phenomenon give insight into the experience of the disciples at Pentecost?
- Try to recognise and affirm the gifts of others this week and use 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.*

