

## PENTECOST

### FIRST READING

*Acts 2:1-11*

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the Apostles were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians — we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.' The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM

*Ps 104(103):1ab, 24ac, 29b-30, 31, 34. R cf. 30*

**R Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul!  
O Lord my God, how great you are!  
How many are your works, O Lord!  
The earth is full of your creatures. R

You take away their breath,  
they die, returning to the dust  
from which they came.  
You send forth your spirit,  
and they are created,  
and you renew the face of the earth. R

May the glory of the Lord last for ever!  
May the Lord rejoice in his works!  
May my thoughts be pleasing to him.  
I will rejoice in the Lord. R

**R Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.**

### SECOND READING

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

Brothers and Sisters: No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit. The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

### Alleluia...

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

## GOSPEL

*John 20:19-23*

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## REFLECTION

The great feast of Pentecost is often called the “birthday of the Church,” but the readings remind us that it is also the

fulfilment of creation itself. In the psalm we pray, “Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.” The Holy Spirit is not an afterthought in the Christian life. The Spirit is the breath of God moving over the waters at creation, the fire of God descending upon the apostles, and the divine life breathed into the Church by the risen Christ.

In St John’s Gospel, Jesus appears among fearful disciples behind locked doors and breathes upon them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” St Cyril of Alexandria saw in this moment a deliberate echo of Genesis, where God breathes life into Adam. Humanity, wounded by sin and fear, is now recreated in Christ. Pentecost is therefore not simply about enthusiasm or spiritual excitement, but about becoming a new creation.

The Fathers also saw in Acts 2 the healing of Babel. At Babel, human pride divided the nations into confusion and rivalry. At Pentecost, people from every nation hear the Gospel in their own tongue. St Augustine wrote that the Spirit gathers into one what sin had scattered abroad. The Church speaks many languages, lives in many cultures, and worships in many places, yet is united by the one Spirit of Christ. This is why the Church can never remain closed in on herself. The same Spirit who descended upon the apostles immediately drove them

outward into the streets to proclaim Christ crucified and risen. St John Chrysostom remarked that the apostles, once timid and fearful, became “lions breathing fire.” Pentecost compels mission because love cannot be kept hidden. If we have truly received the life of Christ, then we are sent to invite others into that same life — making disciples not by force or argument alone, but by lives transformed with joy, holiness, mercy, and hope.

And St Paul reminds us why the Spirit is given: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” The gifts of the Spirit are never merely private possessions. They are given so that the Church may be built up in love and sent into the world in witness.

Pentecost, is not simply something that happened long ago. It is the life of the Church now: fearful hearts made courageous, divided people made one, and ordinary Christians filled with the very breath of God.

*St Cyril of Alexandria,  
Commentary on the Gospel of John,  
Book 12*

*(on John 20:22 and Christ  
breathing the Spirit as the new  
creation).*

*St Augustine, Sermon 271 and  
Sermon 267*

*(on Pentecost as the gathering into  
unity of nations scattered at Babel).*

*St John Chrysostom, Homilies on  
the Acts of the Apostles, Homily 4  
(describing the apostles transformed  
from fearful men into bold  
proclaimers of the Gospel).*