

PENTECOST SUNDAY: DAY

"Pentecost" doesn't refer to the Christian solemnity we celebrate today, but to the Jewish festival of the Feast of Weeks. Start slowly and then surprise us with the spectacular events that suddenly unfold. See Exodus 19:1-15 that recounts the giving of the Law and note the similarities with this event. The "tongues" signify that each of these disciples is set apart for this new moment in God's plan of salvation.

The crowds were required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for this major holiday that required abstaining from work.

You can speak with subdued amazement and astonishment as you ask the questions of the pilgrims.

Galileans = gal-ih-LEE-uhnz

Parthians = PAHR-thee-uhnz

Medes = meedz

Elamites = EE-luh-mīts

Mesopotamia = mes-uh-poh-TAY-mee-uh

Judea = joo-DEE-uh

Cappadocia = cap-uh-DOH-she-uh

There are options for the readings today. Consult your parish staff to learn which readings will be used.

READING I Many of the events of Jesus' life occur at major Jewish feasts, giving the feasts new unexpected meaning. The first reading from Acts occurs on one of the great pilgrimage feasts, Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Described in Leviticus as a harvest festival, it later became a commemoration of Moses' reception of the Torah on Mount

LECTIONARY #63

READING I Acts 2:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the **time for Pentecost was fulfilled**,
they were **all in one place together**.
And **suddenly** there came from the sky
a **noise like a strong driving wind**,
and it **filled the entire house** in which they were.
Then there appeared to them **tongues as of fire**,
which **parted** and came to **rest on each one of them**.
And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit**
and began to **speak in different tongues**,
as the **Spirit enabled them to proclaim**.

Now there were **devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem**.

At this **sound**, they **gathered in a large crowd**,
but they were **confused**
because **each one** heard them speaking in his **own language**.
They were **astounded**, and in **amazement** they asked,
"Are not **all these people** who are speaking **Galileans**?
Then how does **each of us** hear them in his **native language**?
We are **Parthians, Medes, and Elamites**,
inhabitants of **Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia**,

Sinai. On that holy mountain, peals of thunder, lightning, a heavy cloud, and the sound of trumpet blast were tangible signals of divine presence. At the festival celebrated by Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem, fire and the sound of rushing wind coming from the heavens are reminiscent of the signs on Sinai. According to the Jewish writer Philo, when the fire streamed forth from heaven to Sinai, "the flame became articulate speech in the language familiar to the audience." He explained further, "The voice of men is audible, but the voice of God truly

visible" (*Decalogue 46*). The Sinai event is a foreshowing of the Pentecost event.

Like the Sinai fire described by Philo, the tongues at Pentecost are both visible and audible: the word "tongue" (*glossa*) refers first to the visible fiery tongue resting on each person, and then to the speech that is heard by the crowd. Like the theophany on Sinai, the one in Jerusalem manifests God's power and presence in dramatic fashion. The newness of the feast arises from the outpouring of the Spirit filling the whole house and each person, renewing and expanding the covenant of

Pontus = PON-thus
 Phrygia = FRIJ-ee-uh
 Libya = LIB-ee-uh
 Cyrene = SĪ-REE-nee
 Cretans = KREE-tuhns

The listing of nations has led to this closing statement: our differences don't impede us from hearing about God's mighty deeds!

For meditation and context:

TO KEEP IN MIND
 Pray the text, using your favorite method of praying with Scripture.

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

More instruction follows here: speak it slowly but with a sense of the joyful hope embedded in the lines.

Sinai. The fire and trumpet blast on Sinai were momentary signs of God's presence, while the Spirit is an abiding divine presence given "to you and to your children and to all those far off" (Acts 2:39).

READING II **Romans 8:8-17.** Paul contrasts living in the flesh and living in the spirit, not as two components of the human person, but as two ways that a person relates to God and to the world. Living in the flesh, according to Paul, means to be earthbound, mired in the things of this world. Such people are centered on

Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34 (30)

**R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
 or R. Alleluia.**

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
 O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
 How manifold are your works, O LORD!
 The earth is full of your creatures.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
 may the LORD be glad in his works!
 Pleasing to him be my theme;
 I will be glad in the LORD.

If you take away their breath, they perish
 and return to their dust.
 When you send forth your spirit,
 they are created,
 and you renew the face of the earth.

READING II 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are **different kinds of spiritual gifts** but the **same Spirit**;
 there are **different forms of service** but the **same Lord**;
 there are **different workings** but the **same God**
 who produces **all of them in everyone**.

To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit
 is given for some **benefit**.

As a **body is one** though it has **many parts**,
 and **all the parts of the body, though many, are one body**,
 so also **Christ**. >>

self, not on God, pleasing themselves rather than God. They do not belong to Christ. To emphasize the consequences of living according to the flesh, Paul writes "the body is dead because of sin." Since "body" refers to the whole human person, the impression is of a person who is dead even before physical death.

In contrast, being in the spirit is life immersed in Christ. Paul uses the word "spirit" (*pneuma*) to speak of the Holy Spirit, sometimes referred to as "the Spirit of Christ"; *pneuma* also refers to the human spirit that orients a person to be guided by

and in communion with the Spirit of God. Paul's repeated use of the small but significant preposition *in* throughout the description creates a sketch of the intimacy between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit: the Spirit of God dwells in you; Christ is in you; the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.

Those led by the indwelling Spirit are sons and daughters of God. Just as Jesus, speaking in Aramaic, addressed God as "Abba," so too can those who have been adopted into his family. Those who are coheirs with Christ, with his own Spirit

The Spirit is the glue that binds us. Speak the differences—"Jews . . . free" in a positive tone, but speak of the oneness in the Spirit with even deeper joy.

Make this a bold declaration.

After a pause, announce this good news to your listeners.

Contrast this statement with the one that follows.

Stress "is" not "in." The repeated "if" statements suggest we have an important role in our salvation.

Speak these lines with authority. Paul is teaching about what leads to life and death; convey the importance of this instruction.

For in **one Spirit** we were **all baptized into one body**, whether **Jews** or **Greeks**, **slaves** or **free persons**, and we were **all given to drink of one Spirit**.

Or:

READING II Romans 8:8–17

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are in the **flesh** cannot please God.

But **you are not** in the **flesh**;

on the **contrary**, **you** are in the **spirit**, if only the **Spirit of God** dwells in you.

Whoever does **not** have the **Spirit of Christ** does **not belong** to him.

But if **Christ is in** you,

although the **body is dead** because of **sin**, the **spirit is alive** because of **righteousness**.

If the **Spirit of the one** who raised **Jesus** from the **dead** dwells in **you**,

the **one** who raised **Christ** from the **dead** will give **life** to **your mortal bodies** also, through his **Spirit** that dwells in **you**.

Consequently, **brothers and sisters**,

we are **not debtors** to the **flesh**, to live **according** to the **flesh**.

For if you live according to the **flesh**, you will **die**;

but if by the **Spirit** you put to **death** the **deeds of the body**, you will **live**.

For those who are **led** by the **Spirit of God** are **sons of God**.

For you did not receive a **spirit of slavery** to fall back into **fear**,

but you received a **spirit of adoption**, through whom we cry, "**Abba, Father!**"

dwelling in them, can expect to share both in his suffering and in his glory. Paul's theological exposition has an ethical purpose: to encourage believers to exhibit the behaviors, attitudes, and relationships that reflect their communion with the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13. The Corinthian community to whom Paul wrote was beset with serious divisions. Early in the letter, he urged them to "agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you" (1:10). Among the causes of their disagreements were jealousy and rivalry (3:3), divisive attitudes that Paul

addressed throughout the letter. In today's reading, we can well imagine Paul's consternation at people's envy when one person's spiritual gift appears more important than another's. He begins by skillfully admitting that, as they know, there are different gifts, different forms of service, and different workings. What they haven't realized is that the same Spirit is the source of all of these gifts. And every one of such manifestations of the Spirit is given for some benefit, or for "the common good." In verses omitted from our reading, Paul lists a wide variety of gifts, concluding the list

by saying, "the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes."

In the next step of his argument, Paul uses the image of the body to show that the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit is just as necessary for the community as the different parts of the body are for an individual. In verses following today's reading Paul develops a conversation between various parts of the body. If one part says to another "I don't need you," the body wouldn't be complete or function well. In the same way, each gift of the Spirit is