

# PENTECOST SUNDAY: DAY

A reading that directly inverts the Tower of Babel passage from Genesis. (See the first reading for the Pentecost Vigil.) This kind of inverted symmetry is one of the enduring pleasures of reading Scripture. Babel doesn't need to be mentioned in order for your assembly to sense its presence.

Air and fire are the two elements associated with the Holy Spirit. Here, it's air in the form of wind.

And here in the form of tongues of fire.

Read all of these names with care.

Be sure to practice their pronunciation:

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-shee-uh

Pontus = PON-tuhs

Phrygia = FRIJ-ee-uh

Pamphylia = Pam-FIL-ee-uh

Libya = LIB-ee-uh

Cyrene = sī-REE-nee

**READING I** On this feast of Pentecost, our first reading is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The setting is the Jewish feast of Pentecost, also known as *Shavuot*. As Luke tells the story, Jesus' disciples and followers remained in the Jerusalem area after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Because it was a pilgrimage feast, Jews from other parts of the world had also come to Jerusalem. On this particular day, Jesus' followers were gathered together in a house. Suddenly, they receive the Holy Spirit in the forms of a strong wind from the sky and tongues of fire that come down

## LECTIONARY #63

READING I Acts of the Apostles 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**,  
**Pontus** and **Asia**, **Phrygia** and **Pamphylia**,  
**Egypt** and the districts of **Libya** near **Cyrene**,  
as well as **travelers** from **Rome**,

upon each of them. Wind and fire are signs of a theophany, a manifestation of the divine.

The New Testament associates a wide variety of gifts and abilities with the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues. When Jesus' followers in this story begin to speak to the crowd, the crowd is aware that each hear them in their own language. Notice the crowd's reaction first to the sound coming from the house and later to the followers of Jesus speaking in tongues but try not to get caught up in the drama. It is most important to observe that the Spirit moves Jesus' followers and uses them as his

agents to preach "the mighty acts of God," and they do so with great gusto!

**READING II** Today's second reading also focuses on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul begins by making the point that a person cannot proclaim faith in Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit. Apparently, some members of the Christian community at Corinth were "puffed up" over their ability to go into ecstatic trance in prayer and prophecy and to speak in tongues. Paul asserts that there are not different spirits to whom people can lay claim

Cretans = KREE-tuhnz

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

A reading with claims of enduring force.

The invocation of the Holy Spirit is meant to echo the same in the first reading at Pentecost. Here the Holy Spirit is understood in terms of spiritual gifts.

Even stress on these three words:  
"so also Christ."

The vision of radical equality that Paul stresses in these lines is something the Church continues to aspire to.

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**.

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**.

for their own benefit. Rather, it is the *one* Spirit, who motivates and enlivens the life of the Christian community.

Further, Paul categorizes the manifestations of the Spirit, noting that there are different types of spiritual gifts, ways of service or ministering to others, and activities or workings or things wrought. All of these manifestations of the Spirit are necessary for healthy and fruitful communities of faith. Thus, Paul says elsewhere, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Greek word translated here as "quench"

also has the meaning of "extinguish, suppress, or stifle."

Finally, to reinforce the idea that the Spirit's role or mission is to foster unity, Paul uses the metaphor of a body. Just as the body has fingers and toes, a heart and a nose, each with different functions for the benefit of the body, so too does the Christian community, which is the body of Christ, have different manifestations of the Spirit. It does not matter who we are or what is our status in life, we all have been "given to drink of one Spirit."

GOSPEL

The setting for today's Gospel reading is described as "on the evening of that first day of the week." A lot has happened already on that day. Before dawn, Mary Magdalene had been to the garden tomb where Jesus was buried and found it empty. Peter and the Beloved Disciple ran to the tomb to find it empty. Mary met the risen Jesus and then told the disciples about Jesus' resurrection. Despite all of this, we still find them hiding behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews." Most frequently in John's Gospel, "the Jews" is used interchangeably with refer-

## TO KEEP IN MIND

Sequences originated as extensions of the sung Alleluia before the proclamation of the Gospel, although they precede the Alleluia now. The Pentecost Sequence, also called the Golden Sequence, is an ancient liturgical hymn praising the Holy Spirit. It is the source of the hymn "Come, Holy Ghost."

A narrative reading that depicts the transmission of the Holy Spirit through Jesus himself to his disciples.

Jesus enters the scene with the word "Peace."

Breath is the most ancient sign of life in scripture. Here, Jesus' powers are transmitted directly through his breath. Note the parallel construction: forgive/forgiven; retain/retained.

ences to the religious authorities in Jerusalem, so we must be careful not to assume that this mention of Jews applies to our Jewish brothers and sisters today or even to Jews in Jesus' time.

This story of the appearance of the risen Jesus to his disciples bears some similarities with Luke 24:36–40, in which the risen Jesus appears suddenly and shows his hands and feet to the disciples to allay their fears and show that he is truly alive. However, there are some important differences, as well. The greeting Jesus gives them, "Peace be with you," reminds us of

## SEQUENCE Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!  
Come, Father of the poor!  
Come, source of all our store!  
Come, within our bosoms shine.  
You, of comforters the best;  
You, the soul's most welcome guest;  
Sweet refreshment here below;  
In our labor, rest most sweet;  
Grateful coolness in the heat;  
Solace in the midst of woe.  
O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of yours,  
And our inmost being fill!  
Where you are not, we have naught,

Nothing good in deed or thought,  
Nothing free from taint of ill.  
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour your dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away:  
Bend the stubborn heart and will;  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;  
Guide the steps that go astray.  
On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore  
In your sevenfold gift descend;  
Give them virtue's sure reward;  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end. Amen.  
Alleluia.

## GOSPEL John 20:19–23

## A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

On the **evening** of that first day of the **week**,  
when the **doors** were locked, where the **disciples** were,  
for **fear** of the Jews,  
Jesus came and **stood** in their midst  
and **said** to them, "**Peace** be with you."  
When he had **said** this, he **showed** them his hands and his side.  
The disciples **rejoiced** when they saw the Lord.  
Jesus said to them again, "**Peace** be with you.  
As the **Father** has sent me, so I send **you**."  
And when he had **said** this, he **breathed** on them and  
said to them,  
"**Receive** the Holy Spirit.  
Whose sins you **forgive** are **forgiven** them,  
and whose **sins** you **retain** are **retained**."

Jesus' words to the disciples earlier in John's Gospel, when during the farewell discourse and before his arrest and crucifixion he says "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:27).

John's version of the story also has the detail about Jesus breathing upon the disciples and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This statement should recall for us the second creation story of Genesis, when God creates a man, Adam, and breathes into him the breath of life and he "became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). When Jesus

breathes on the disciples, they become "new" living beings insofar as they have a new mission, which is to continue the work that God had given to Jesus to do—to be the light that casts out darkness (John 8:12; see also John 1:5; 3:19–21). When we hear the command, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained," we can see how it fits in as part of this larger mission of Jesus' disciples to be light in darkness. C.C.