

FIRST READING – A PENTECOST

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

When the day of Pentecost had come,
they were all together in one place.
And suddenly from heaven there came a sound
like the rush of a violent wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,
and a tongue rested on each of them.
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages,
as the Spirit gave them ability.

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

And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,
because each one heard them speaking in their own language.

Amazed and astonished, they asked,
“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”

And how is it that we hear, each of us,
in our own language?

Parthians, Medes, 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 converts,

Cretans and Arabs –

in our own languages we hear them speaking
about God’s deeds of power.”

Parthians = **PAHR**-thih-uhns

Medes = **MEEDS**

Elamites = **EE**-luhm-ights

Pontus = **PAHN**-tuhs

Phrygia = **FRIJ**-ih-uhns

Pamphylia = pam-**FIL**-ih-uh

Libya = **LIB**-ih-uh

Cyrene = sigh-**REE**-nee

Cretans = **KREE**-tuhs

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A PENTECOST

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause - and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;

and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;

and there are varieties of activities,

but it is the same God who activates all of them 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 the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body

— Jews or Greeks, slave or free —

and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A PENTECOST

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord

It was evening of= n the day Jesus rose from the dead,
the first day of the week,
and the doors of the house where the disciples had met
were locked for fear of the Jews.

Jesus came and stood among them and said,

“Peace be with you.”

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then 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.”

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 retain the sins of any, they are retained.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Pentecost originated as a final celebration of the ingathering of the grain harvest, which had begun at Passover. Later Judaism transformed it into a feast of salvation history celebrating the giving of the Law at Sinai and the establishment of Israel as God's people.

All these associations were carried over into the Christian feast that marked the conclusion of the great fifty days. The grain harvest and the Law are replaced by the gift of the Spirit, and the constitution of the old Israel is replaced by the constitution of the new. The feast of the Law becomes the feast of the Spirit.

Reading I: Acts 2:1-11

There is no unanimity in the New Testament about a single outpouring of the Spirit. The Gospel of the day, as we shall see, places the gift of the Spirit on Easter Sunday evening, while Acts 2 puts it on Pentecost.

Originally, perhaps, the gift of the Spirit was associated with each of the resurrection appearances, and perhaps (though this is disputed) the Pentecost story corresponds to the otherwise unknown appearance to the five hundred (1 Cor 15:6).

Historically, this appearance marks the foundation of the Church as a wider community than the original Twelve and the beginning of the kerygma. Perhaps, as a later part of this story suggests (the crowd's suspicion that the apostles were full of new wine), the beginning of the kerygma was marked by an outburst of glossolalia such as Paul describes as taking place at Corinth (1 Cor 12-14).

This earlier concept of glossolalia has been overlaid with a new symbolism (whether due to Luke or to his tradition, we cannot say) in which Pentecost reverses the effect of Babel.

Responsorial Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34*

This is a hymn of praise to God for his works in creation. The dominant theology of the Spirit in the wisdom literature ("the Spirit of God fills the world") stresses the work of the Spirit in the created order.

By contrast, the New Testament concentrates almost exclusively on the eschatological work of the Spirit. The pneumatology of the New Testament is conditioned by its Christology.

When the psalmist speaks of the "renewal" of creation through the Spirit, he is probably thinking of no more than the renewal of nature at springtime.

But in Christian use it can be reinterpreted to mean the eschatological renewal of creation, a renewal of which the Church is the first fruits.

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

Paul's Corinthians were very keen on glossolalia, but its effect on the community was questionable. It led to divisiveness—those who spoke in tongues treated those who did not have this particular gift as second-class citizens.

In reply, Paul insists on several things here. First, to have the Spirit means to confess that Jesus is Lord. Here Paul's use of the name Jesus is especially nuanced. "Jesus" means the earthly Jesus, Christ crucified.

The Corinthians regarded the death of Christ as a mere episode of the past and put all their money on the purely spiritual, ethereal Christ. Paul recalls them to the centrality of the Cross, pricking the bubble of their enthusiasm.

Second, the gifts of the Spirit take different forms, not just the one form of speaking in tongues. Each gift, however unspectacular, has to be used for the common good.

Third, the gift of the Spirit must not lead to individualism but to the building up of the corporate body of the community. The church is one body through a common baptism and a common "drinking of one Spirit."

The latter is probably a reference to the baptismal Eucharist rather than to a rite analogous to the later rite of confirmation (see "spiritual drink" in 1 Cor 10:4). Here is a further suggestion that 1 Corinthians was written for the paschal feast.

Gospel: John 20:19-23

We have already seen that John places the giving of the Spirit on Easter day, and we have discussed the historical and theological grounds for this.

Here, as in Acts, the Spirit empowers the church for its mission ("even so I send you"). The mission is defined here, however, not as kerygma but as the forgiving and retaining of sins.

The traditional Catholic and High Anglican interpretation of this has seen it as a reference to the sacrament of penance, but this is probably an anachronism as far as the evangelist is concerned.

In the New Testament, forgiveness of sins is baptismal language (see Lk 24:47), and what we have here is the Johannine version of the tradition that includes in the appearance stories the command to baptize.

Our text speaks of the giving or withholding of baptism consequent upon faith or unbelief at hearing the gospel message. Only derivatively and insofar as the sacrament of absolution is a renewal of the baptismal status can this text be stretched to cover the traditional interpretation.

If our new interpretation be sustained, it is significant that both the second reading and the gospel speak of baptism, for in patristic times Pentecost was the day when those who for some reason had missed their baptism at Easter were baptized.

Baptism was not continually administered at any time of the year because its corporate significance was paramount.

Reginald H. Fuller
Daniel Westberg