

Our Sunday Readings

Mass during the day:
 ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:1-11
 PSALM 104:1,24,29-31,34
 I CORINTHIANS 12:3b-7,12-13*
 JOHN 20:19-23*
 *Other passages may be chosen.

Sending the Spirit

JOHN 20:19-23

Reading closely

1. What might be the significance of when Jesus appears?
2. Why are the doors locked?
3. What are all the ways the disciples might have reacted to Jesus' appearance?
4. Why does Jesus show them his hands and side?
5. What does Jesus do for his disciples?
6. Do you think the disciples could tell that Jesus had bestowed the Spirit on them? If so, how?

Living the word

7. What do you offer others?
8. What do you need from others?
9. How can you be a better bearer of peace?

THE GOSPEL READING

Peace

Peace be with you was a familiar greeting among Jews. Peace was the great hope God's people had for the world.

Jesus' gift of peace also frees the disciples from fear, and the disciples desperately need this

freedom. As they go forth from their locked room to proclaim the gospel, they will meet resistance, hostility, and outright rejection.

For testimony

Before he was killed, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (14:15-18). Now the risen Jesus sends his followers to continue his ministry of loving people even to death (15:12-13). They don't go alone: the Spirit makes them inseparable from Jesus. The Spirit is also the one who will speak through them, giving testimony to the truth (15:26-27).

New creations

Jesus breathes on his disciples just as God once breathed life into the first human being (Genesis 2:7). Now that these disciples share in the life that comes from the risen Jesus, they share his power to bring others into union with God. However, they will also hold people accountable for refusing to accept that Jesus brings salvation to all (v.23).

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:1-11

Reading closely

1. Who all has gathered?
2. Why have so many people gathered?
3. How do you imagine Jesus' followers reacting to the wind and fire?
4. What all might they think is happening?
5. What gift does the Spirit give? Why?
6. How might Jesus' followers feel about this gift?
7. What might each of Jesus' followers be saying?
8. If you were in the crowd, how would you respond?

Living the word

9. How can you tell when you're cooperating with the Holy Spirit?
10. Have there been times you think someone falsely claimed the presence of the Spirit?
11. Have you ever been amazed by the work of the Spirit?

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:1-11

Fulfilling his promise

In his Gospel (Book One) Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is with Jesus. At the end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus promised to share the Spirit with his disciples. Today's passage from Book Two shows the fulfillment of that promise.

Claiming Pentecost

Pentecost was the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot). It was originally a harvest festival celebrated about fifty days after Passover. The feast evolved into a commemoration of God's giving of the law (Torah) on Mount Sinai, where **fire** was a sign of God's presence (Exodus 19:18).

The Hebrew word *ruah* means **wind**, *breath* or *spirit*. In this passage all three meanings are implied. God breathes his Spirit into those who believe in the saving power of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Jewish feast of Pentecost has thus come to assume new meaning for Christians.

A summary story

Right before his Ascension Jesus told his disciples that they would *be his witnesses* throughout the

world (Acts 1:8). Acts of the Apostles is the story of how the holy Spirit helped Jesus' followers to preach and build up God's church. Today's passage sums up the first part of the book: Jews from all over the world hear what God has accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection.

I CORINTHIANS 12:3b-7, 12-13

All kinds of people

The Christians at Corinth included people of different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, education, and income levels, which led to internal division and snobbery. Some people thought they were better than others because they had better spiritual gifts.

All kinds of gifts

Paul makes it clear that every person who believes in Jesus has the holy Spirit within them and that every gift comes from the Spirit. Therefore, no one should presume to think they're better than anyone else. Moreover, the gifts of the Spirit aren't given to make people feel special but to strengthen God's church.

The Spirit's presence within individuals draws them into a community. The Spirit bestows gifts that makes the community diverse but also interdependent. The community will be unhealthy and ineffective if its members don't value each other and work together.

PRAYER

*adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Pentecost
(Roman Missal, 1985)*

Father of light,
you have enlightened the minds of your disciples
through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
Bless us and give us the gifts of your Spirit forever.
May that fire that hovered over the disciples as
tongues of flame burn out all evil from our hearts
and make us glow with pure light.
May the voice of the Spirit strengthen our faith
and inspire others who need love, guidance, and
hope.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.