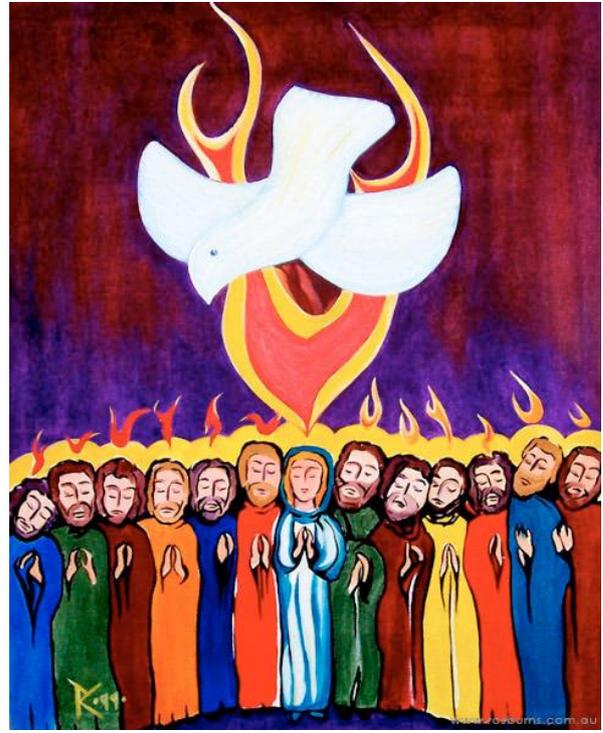


A Service of the Word for Pentecost

The Jewish Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, falls fifty days after Passover: a celebration of the first fruits of the harvest and of the giving of the Law. But the Pentecost after Jesus' death and resurrection becomes for his followers the feast of the Spirit. Manifested in wind and fire, the Creator Spirit of God ignites and impels them. From now on the good news of Jesus is not a precious memory or a private belief. It is hope and new life for all the world – represented by the many languages spoken by the apostles. So we celebrate the transforming, renewing presence of God's Spirit in the Church, in our hearts, and in all creation



Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed, alleluia!

Blessed are you, creator God,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
As your Spirit moved over the face of the waters
bringing life and light to your creation,
pour out your Spirit on us today
that we may walk as children of light
and by your grace reveal your presence.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

What God has prepared for those who love him, he has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything. Therefore in penitence let us open our hearts to the Lord, who has prepared good things for those who love him.

Silence for self-examination, followed by prayer for forgiveness:

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Prayer of absolution, then let us sing in praise of God ...

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Father.
Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Father.

To God be glory for ever.

To God be glory for ever.

Alleluia, amen, **alleluia, amen,**

Alleluia, amen, **alleluia, amen, alleluia, amen ...**

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to Christ Jesus ...

Glory to God, glory to God, glory to the Spirit ...

Silent prayer, followed by the collect for the day:

God, who as at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgment in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

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.

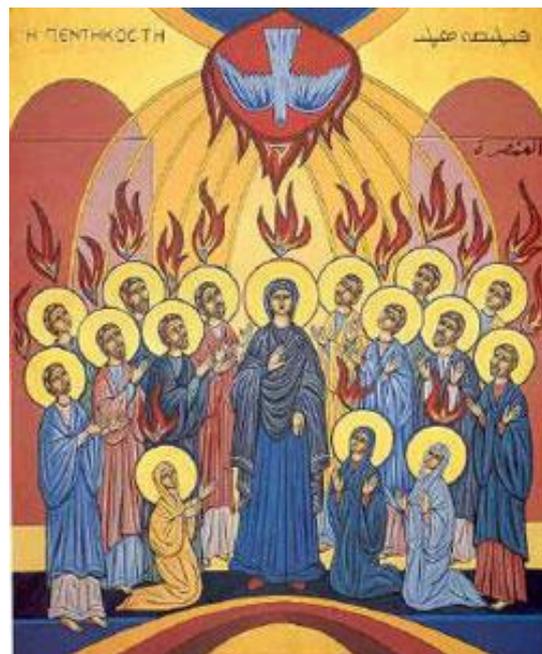
Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,

because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 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 native 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 proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Thanks be to God.



*Verses from Psalm 104, with the response, **Send forth your Spirit, O Lord!***

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
 There is the sea, spread far and wide;
 and there move creatures beyond number, both small and great.
 There are the ships, and there is that Leviathan
 whom you have made to play in the deep. **R**

All of these look to you, to give them their food in due season.

When you give it them, they gather it;
 you open your hand and they are filled with good.
When you hide your face they are troubled;
 when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
 and you renew the face of the earth. **R**

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in his works.
He looks on the earth and it trembles;
 he touches the mountains and they smoke.
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
 I will make music to my God while I have my being, alleluia! **R**

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

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. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 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, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel acclamation:

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

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John:
Glory to you, O Lord.

When it was evening on that day, 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ!

The day of Pentecost means we are fifty days on from Easter, still singing 'alleluia'. But what may be affecting us more acutely is that we are also ten weeks on from lockdown. And after all that time, perhaps energy is flagging.

For some of us it may be lassitude from so much time enclosed. For others, exhaustion from so much extra hard work in essential services. Either way, energy is crucial. Without physical energy and exercise our bodies get flabby; without mental energy our imaginations dry up and our wisdom falters; without social energy we grow isolated and bored; without political energy we can lose heart and so be subject to tyranny.

*Modern physics teaches us that energy is even more fundamental to existence than matter or light. Where we are located in space, the very possibility of life derives from the sun's energy and heat and light: that is, from a great furnace of **fire**. We have learned to channel fire on earth for heat and light and to generate electricity. And it was tongues of flame that energised those men and women in a room in Jerusalem that Pentecost.*

Fire is the sign of God's Spirit. It's as though their years in the company of Jesus, hearing his teaching, seeing his signs, witnessing his death and resurrection, have provided a kind of pilot light, like on our gas boilers. And then this 50th day of Easter the pilot ignites a huge explosion, a force of heat and light which cannot be contained.

Uncontained fire is of course highly dangerous. Think of the terrifying blazes that spread through parts of Australia, or the awful tragedy of Grenfell Tower. Yet this pentecostal fire is like the bush that Moses saw, ablaze but not consumed. The power of the Spirit is a fiery energy not of destruction but of love – love that moves the sun and the other stars, love that draws two people together; the same love that binds together the Father and the Son.

*But before the tongues of flame, a powerful sound: 'the rush of a violent wind'. **Wind** is more than just a sign of God's Spirit. In the Bible the words for 'wind' and 'spirit' are identical, whether you read the Hebrew of the Old Testament (ruach) or the Greek of the New (pneuma). And that spirit-wind is there right at the beginning of the story: even before the Word of God says 'Let there be light', the Wind of God sweeps over the face of the waters.*

Wind, like fire, can generate power and can wreak destruction. A huge force swirling the globe, impelling us onwards and outwards and recognising no boundaries of nation or tongue. So it is with the Spirit that blows upon these

followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. They proclaim and they praise in many languages, for the Spirit of God fills the whole earth, and the good news of Jesus is for everyone.

From Pentecost, then, the Church of Christ cannot be restricted to one people or one language. It is, as we confess, catholic, or universal. 'In the one Spirit', says St Paul, 'we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit'.

And here, remarkably, 'Spirit' is neither wind nor fire but **water**. For water too is a primal source of life and refreshment, of energy and electricity. And water too resists being contained: it flows and swirls and spreads, it carries people and objects in its wake. Which is why our baptism in water and Spirit is not the conferring of a privileged status so much as entry into a current.

For whether you picture it as wind or fire or water, this Holy Spirit is endlessly moving, endlessly renewing. It is not some once-for-all deposit but an ever-flowing gift: not fossil fuel but renewable energy.

What do you do with such unpredictable power? People, not least the Church, have tried to manage the Spirit, to channel or restrict it with walls or sandbags or dams: the ultimate lockdown. In vain. For the gift we celebrate today and tremblingly receive is the renewable energy of freedom. Set on fire with the love that ever burns and never consumes; blown into new insights and new relationships with the wind that stirs creation; refreshed and liberated in the deep water which is the life of God.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, we pray to the Father for the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit:

- for the fruit of the Spirit, love and joy and peace, to govern our world and our relationships;
- for the wisdom of the Spirit to fill all in positions of responsibility and leadership;
- for the gifts of the Spirit to fill those baptised in water and Spirit in the universal Church – for knowledge and faith, healing and discernment;
- for all enclosed in home, hospital or prison; for those who are lonely, and all from whom we are separated;
- for key workers and all on whom we depend for daily needs;
- for all in distress or in sickness, especially sufferers from Covid-19;
- for the dying, the bereaved and the departed, especially Andy Johnson – for our rejoicing together in the life of the Spirit ...

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven ...



An act of Spiritual Communion:

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

Post-Communion Prayer and Blessing:

Faithful God,
who fulfilled the promises of Easter
by sending us your Holy Spirit
and opening to every race and nation
the way of life eternal:
open our lips by your Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Spirit of truth lead us into all truth, give us grace to confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord, and strengthen us to proclaim the word and
works of God;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit, be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Let us go in the peace of Christ, alleluia, alleluia!

Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia!