

# Pentecost

Sunday, May 28, 2023



*“On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.”*

Acts 2:1-4

(Contemporary English Version)

Fifty days after Easter we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (a.k.a. Pentecost Sunday), which is a day to remember the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles of Jesus while they waited in Jerusalem. The arrival of the Spirit inaugurated the Church, through which all followers of Jesus are joined together as one body by this same Spirit.

What was true in those first days of the Church still holds for us today. The hope for a life renewed and restored is still solid and true. And so are the instructions Jesus gave in His last days on earth to all those who would choose to believe and give their lives to Him.

Upon his ascension to Heaven, Jesus told his disciples to go and make more disciples. To teach and tell everyone the story of forgiveness and redemption. And with his instruction, Jesus not only called his people to that mission but also made provision for their success. In fact, the equipping of the faithful to do as He had described was so vital, so crucial that Jesus told his followers, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.” (Acts 1:4b)

For the disciples, that instruction to wait should have brought to mind a moment they shared with Jesus not long before. In an intimate gathering just prior to his betrayal and execution, Jesus challenged them with this: “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.” (John 14:15-17a NIV)

It's interesting that Jesus had them wait. Having witnessed the tragic and miraculous of Jesus' ministry, they found themselves at the starting line of the most amazing, wonderful, eternally significant mission ever. But rather than riding the immediate momentum of the Resurrection, those first believers were told by their Savior to pause. Hold on. Be patient. There was to be no

demographic studies or ministry prep work. No strategizing or vision casting. Instead, they were to stay close, be together, pray, and wait.

This command to sit-tight before embarking on the biggest, most life-altering endeavor ever indicates the gifting of the Holy Spirit is undeniably integral to the purposes of God. So much so that we shouldn't (actually couldn't) do it without His help. Only through the guidance and power of the Spirit can any follower of Jesus fulfill the call to love and serve in faith-filled obedience.

So what does this mean for us?



Priest and professor Henri Nouwen offers this reflection on the giving of the Spirit:

“Jesus sends the Spirit so that we may be led to the full truth of the divine life. Truth does not mean an idea, concept, or doctrine, but true relationship. To be led into the truth is to be led into the same relationship that Jesus has with the Father; it is to enter into a divine betrothal. Thus Pentecost is the completion of Jesus’ mission. On Pentecost the fullness of Jesus’ ministry becomes visible. When the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples and dwells with them, their lives are transformed into Christ-like lives, lives shaped by the same love that exists between the Father and the Son. The spiritual life is indeed a life in which we are lifted up to become partakers of the divine life. ... The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it.”

(Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life, p.54-55)

Jesus has all the authority to bring about the redemption his Resurrection foretells. And He has invited us into the Resurrected life, asking us to affirm our love for Him by doing what He's asked us to do. To go and tell; to love and serve. To surrender ourselves for the sake of His Kingdom. It means we are to embrace a Christ-like posture of humility and gentleness, being honest about our struggles yet eager to be people of peace, joy, grace, mercy, justice, and forgiveness. We could not be people like that without the comfort, care, and guidance of the Spirit.

As we recognize the gifting of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, and His continual dwelling within all true believers, may we relinquish our efforts to be faithful in our day-to-day living in our own strength and instead submit ourselves in every moment to the Spirit, who joins, binds, and unifies the faithful together.



## Final Blessing

In your celebration of the gift of our Helper, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you and empowers you to be more and more like Jesus, contemplate this encouraging instruction from Scripture as you offer prayers of thanksgiving to God:

*"I [the Apostle Paul] am in prison because I belong to the Lord. Therefore I urge you who have been chosen by God to live up to the life to which God called you. Always be humble, gentle, and patient, accepting each other in love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way. There is one body and one Spirit, and God called you to have one hope. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. There is one God and Father of everything. He rules everything and is everywhere and is in everything."*

Ephesians 4:1-6 (New Century Version)

## Prompts for Reflection and Meditation

- Reflect on an experience when God asked you to wait. What was your response? How did you feel? How did you experience God in the waiting?
- How have you experienced the Spirit at work in your life? Consider taking 20-30 minutes to write down specifics, thanking God for His presence and care for you.
- What do you need to let go of, trusting the guidance of the Spirit to lead you toward a greater faith and willing obedience? Will you commit to releasing this to God, with the help of the Spirit, over the next month?
- How are you doing with going, telling, and making disciples of Jesus? Wherever you're at, ask the Spirit to fill and empower you toward a whole-hearted living-out of your faith.
- How is your participation in the Church? Do you feel at peace and united with your fellow sisters and brothers in the faith? Talk with God about any tensions, frustrations, hurts, or disappointments. Also thank Him for the joys and life-giving relationships you've experienced through your faith community.
- How do you invite the Spirit to affect your behavior and attitude in your various roles? (e.g. parent, child, sibling, friend, worker, citizen) Does anything need to change? Talk with God about developing a more intentional life that exhibits spiritual fruit. (see Galatians 5:22-23)

## A Prayer

Spirit of God—

I open my hands,  
a gesture of submission to You.

Fill my spirit  
with peace and joy.

Refresh my heart  
with the love of Christ.

Renew my mind  
with grace and truth.

Clear my vision  
to notice and act.

Grow my desire  
for mercy and kindness.

Comfort me  
with the hope of resurrection.

Humble me  
to serve others.

For the sake of Jesus—

Amen.

