

FIRST READING – PENTECOST B

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 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 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 = FRU-ih-uhns

Pamphylia = pam-FIL-ih-uh

Libya = LIB-ih-uh

Cyrene = sigh-REE-nee

Cretans = KREE-tuhns

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – PENTECOST B

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, slaves 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 – PENTECOST B

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to the disciples:

“When the Advocate comes,
whom I will send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father,
he will testify on my behalf.
You also are to testify
because you have been with me from the beginning.
I still have many things to say to you,
but you cannot bear them now.
When the Spirit of truth comes,
he will guide you into all the truth;
for he will not speak on his own,
but will speak whatever he hears,
and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
He will glorify me,
because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
All that the Father has is mine.
For this reason I said that he will take what is mine
and declare it to you.”



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 Israelis 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 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 "supernatural drink" in 1 Cor 10:4). Here is a further suggestion that 1 Corinthians was written for the paschal feast.

Gospel: John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Today's (optional) gospel reading combines the third and fifth of the five Johannine Paraclete sayings. They are closely related, for both speak of the teaching function of the Holy Spirit, of the way in which the content of the Spirit's teaching is derived from Jesus, and therefore, since Jesus is the truth, of the Spirit as the Spirit of truth.

The first of our Paraclete sayings (the third in the Gospel of John) is closely paralleled in the synoptic tradition ([Mark 13:11](#); [Matt 10:19-20](#); [Luke 12:12](#); cf. [Luke 21:15](#)) and is perhaps the original saying out of which the other ones in John developed.

As in the Synoptists, this saying is set in the context of persecution predicted for the disciples. This promise is attested so widely and in such a variety of contexts (see above) that it has a high claim to authenticity.

Jesus promised his disciples that they would have the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit as they bore witness in a situation of rejection and persecution. Perhaps this promise originally applied to their missions while Jesus was still on earth.

Since Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God was itself empowered by the Spirit, may we not at least suppose that the apostles' preaching during Jesus' earthly life was similarly empowered, although, of course, they did not receive the Spirit as a permanent endowment until Pentecost?

In the light of the Pentecost experience, the Gospel tradition both synoptic and Johannine, will then have transferred this promise to Jesus' farewell discourse ([Mark 13](#), [Luke 21](#), and [John 14-16](#)).

The coming of the Spirit is closely tied to the person of Christ. In this passage it is "I" (=Jesus) who will send the Spirit. That is why some of us believe that the present movement underway in the Anglican communion to remove the *Filioque* from the Nicene Creed as a gesture to the Orthodox is misguided, despite the wording of verse 26b ("proceeds from the Father"). At least it should be asserted that the Western Church showed a sound theological instinct in adding "and the Son," and that that

addition was true to this verse (“*I will send you*”).

If it be objected that the Nicene Creed is talking about the immanent as opposed to the economic Trinity (the external relations of the three Persons rather than their function in salvation history), we reply that that is not what the Fourth Gospel is talking about here (see Raymond Brown, *ad loc.*). Perhaps the best formula would be “who proceeds from the Father *through the Son*,” which is what the *Filioque* probably intended to assert.

The most important feature of this text, though, may be its insistence on the concurrent witness of the apostles and the Spirit. The apostles and the apostolic Church after their deaths are witnesses of the Word, but the Word without Spirit may be dead, while the Spirit without Word may run wild. Word and Spirit, apostolic witness and witness of the Spirit—these must be held together, though they have often been separated in the history of the Christian Church.

The second part of our reading, as already noted, comprises the fifth Paraclete saying. Its point is very similar to our last remark on the third saying. If the apostles are to bear witness, they must constantly be guided back to the Jesus tradition.

The Spirit brings no new revelation but does bring a constantly renewed and ever deeper understanding of the original revelation. To suppose that there can be any additional revelations over and above that which was revealed in Christ is to deny the eschatological character of that revelation.

It is puzzling, however, to read further that the Spirit “will declare to you the things that are to come” (16:13). This has suggested to some commentators new apocalyptic revelations like those of the Johannine Apocalypse.

Can this be the intention of the fourth evangelist (who, despite other affinities, is so different in his eschatological outlook from the Seer who wrote Revelation)?

It is more likely that our passage means “interpreting to each generation the contemporary significance of what Jesus has said and done” (R. Brown, thus reinforcing the general import of these two Paraclete sayings).

Reginald H. Fuller