

# Reflections on the Gospel



# THE SAVING WORD

MATTHEW

PENTECOST SUNDAY / A

31 MAY 2020

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

## GOSPEL

Jn 20:19-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

*As the Father sent me, so I send you: Receive the Holy Spirit.*

In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you'.

'As the Father sent me,  
so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.

For those whose sins you forgive,  
they are forgiven;

for those whose sins you retain,  
they are retained.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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## RECONCILING SPIRIT

Today's rich array of scriptural readings brings out the Church's sense of being a community equipped by the Spirit to take up the mission of Jesus.

The first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, locates the imparting of the Spirit on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, a pilgrimage feast celebrated fifty days after Passover.

In biblical tradition, wind and fire signal the presence and power of God, as when Israel stood before God at Mount Sinai. What is described here seems to be a central fiery mass from which distinct 'tongues' ('as if of fire': not real fire!) separate off and come to rest on individuals.

The sense is that the Spirit, which rested solely upon Jesus during his own life, is now, as he promised (Luke 24:49), being distributed among those who are to carry on his mission – in first instance to Israel, eventually 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

The variety of people who hear and understand the testimony of the apostles in their own language foreshadows this worldwide mission. In many languages the Church will communicate the single message of God's reconciling love.

The Gospel (John 20:19-23) associates the gift of the Spirit more closely with the resurrection. On Easter Sunday evening the risen Lord breathes out upon his disciples the Spirit that will empower them to take up the mission that he has received from the Father. Central to this will be passing on the reconciliation ('whose sins you shall forgive ...') that he, as Lamb of God (1:29), has brought into the world.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

## FIRST READING

Acts 2:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak different languages.*

When Pentecost day came round, the apostles had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them' in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

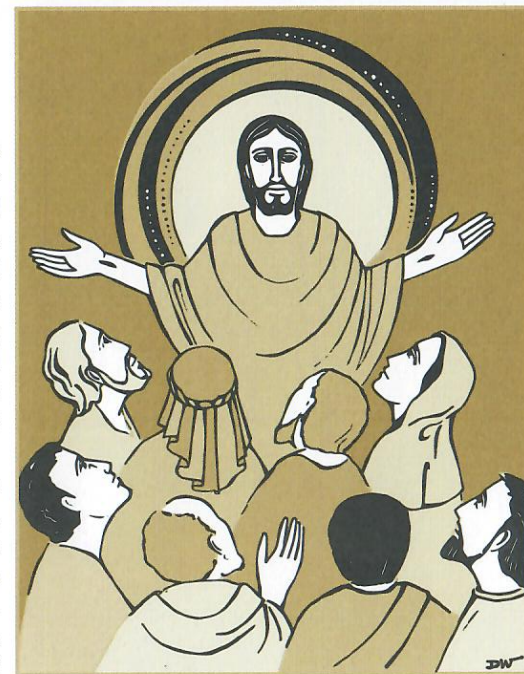
■ The word of the Lord.

## RESP PSALM

Ps 103:1, 24, 29-31, 34. R. v. 30

**R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. (or Alleluia.)**

1. Bless the Lord, my soul! / Lord God, how great you are! / How many are your works, O Lord! / The earth is full of your riches. **R.**
2. You take back your spirit, they die, / returning to the dust from which they came. / You send forth your spirit, they are created; / and you renew the face of the earth. **R.**



3. May the glory of the Lord last for ever! / May the Lord rejoice in his works! / May my thoughts be pleasing to him. / I find my joy in the Lord. **R.**

## SECOND READING

1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13

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

*In the one Spirit we were all baptised, making one body.*

No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose.