

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

(JOHN 17:20-26)



We have celebrated the Feast of the Ascension, so we are now in the in-between time, awaiting Pentecost. The Gospel reading for our Eucharist today comes from the section of John's version, which is often referred to as the 'Priestly Prayer of Christ'.

Jesus is at table with those who have accompanied him in his ministry, but they played no active part in helping him or being delegated by him to share in his work. Jesus now prays for them and for all those who will come to believe through their future apostolate of spreading Jesus' word.

By making God known to the disciples, Jesus is offering them something more, a share in the oneness which is to be found between himself and the Father. This should manifest itself in the unity which exists among believers who have accepted Jesus' teaching. But this unity among disciples should have an effect on the wider community: it should bring other people to believe in Jesus and his message.

In biblical tradition, God was revealed in glory, chiefly through the Law, but now the supreme way of this happening is in the person of Jesus. In the future, this revealing will take place through the unifying love which the disciples have for one another, which should reflect the love which exists between Jesus and the Father. ■

REFLECT

As we await the celebration of Pentecost, we might remember that the giving of the Holy Spirit is the final act in the Easter mystery. The Spirit continues the presence of Jesus among his disciples, and Jesus promised that the Spirit will reveal to us the ever-deepening meaning of the teaching of Jesus. At the Eucharist on the Feast of the Ascension, we heard Jesus assure the disciples that he will send to them what the Father has promised.

We may well pray in this time, this novena between Ascension and Pentecost, for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But we might be careful what we pray for. The one thing of which we can be certain from the Bible is that the Spirit will not be contained or controlled. The Spirit will not be channelled through church structures or customs and may well speak through the most unlikely of

persons. Someone once entitled a book *The God of Surprises*, and perhaps that is not a bad way of understanding the Holy Spirit.

Many people have important questions about the Church today and we should treat their questions with respect and acknowledge their sincerity. In the Acts of the Apostles, the people listening to the inspired disciples wondered what was going on, since Jesus' followers could be understood, which means they were making sense to those who heard them and were amazed.

So, by all means, let us ask for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit this coming Pentecost; but at the same time, we might prepare ourselves for what the Spirit might be saying, for it is likely to be a surprise. ■

LEARN

Pentecost was originally a Jewish feast: the name means 'fiftieth', referring to the days since the feast of Passover:

It was a spring grain harvest festival: there were two harvests in the year, the other in the autumn.

Many Jewish feasts originated in harvest celebrations.

Passover combined a shepherd's rite, represented by the lamb, and a farmer's celebration, seen in the use of unleavened, that is pure, bread.

DO

Turn on an electric light: see how the invisible power transforms the everyday objects of metal and glass. Think how the Holy Spirit could transform you – if you were willing.



SAY

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle within us the fire of your love.

(Traditional prayer)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O Lord, hear my voice, for I have called to you;
of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face;
hide not your face from me, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord,
so that we, who believe that the Saviour of
the human race
is with you in your glory,
may experience, as he promised,
until the end of the world,
his abiding presence among us.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 7:55-60

A reading from the first Act of the Apostles.
Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed
into heaven and saw the glory of God, and
Jesus standing at God's right hand. "I can
see heaven thrown open," he said, "and the
Son of Man standing at the right hand of
God." At this all the members of the council
shouted out and stopped their ears with their
hands; then they all rushed at him, sent him
out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses
put down their clothes at the feet of a young
man called Saul. As they were stoning him,
Stephen said in invocation, "Lord Jesus,
receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and
said aloud, "Lord, do not hold this sin against
them"; and with these words he fell asleep.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 96

Response:

The Lord is king, most high above all the
earth.

or
Alleluia!

- The Lord is king, let earth rejoice,
the many coastlands be glad.
His throne is justice and right. (R.)

- The skies proclaim his justice;
all peoples see his glory.
All you spirits, worship him. (R.)
- For you indeed are the Lord
most high above all the earth
exalted far above all spirits. (R.)

SECOND READINGApocalypse
22:12-14, 16-17, 20

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.
I, John, heard a voice speaking to me:
"Very soon now, I shall be with you again,
bringing the reward to be given to every
man according to what he deserves. I am the
Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,
the Beginning and the End. Happy are those
who will have washed their robes clean, so
that they will have the right to feed on the
tree of life and can come through the gates
into the city."

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to make
these revelations to you for the sake of the
churches. I am of David's line, the root of
David and the bright star of the morning."

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." Let
everyone who listens answer, "Come." Then
let all who are thirsty come; all who want it
may have the water of life, and have it free.

The one who guarantees these revelations
repeats his promise: I shall indeed be with
you soon. Amen; come, Lord Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I will not leave you orphans, says the Lord;
I will come back to you, and your hearts will
be full of joy.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 17:20-26

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said:

"Holy Father,
I pray not only for these,
but for those also
who through their words will believe in me.
May they all be one.
Father, may they be one in us,
as you are in me and I am in you,
so that the world may believe it was you
who sent me.

I have given them the glory you gave to me,
that they may be one as we are one.
With me in them and you in me,
may they be so completely one
that the world will realise that it was you
who sent me
and that I have loved them as much as you
love me.

Father,
I want those you have given me
to be with me where I am,
so that they may always see the glory
you have given me
because you loved me
before the foundation of the world.
Father, Righteous One,
the world has not known you,
but I have known you,
and these have known
that you have sent me.

I have made your name known to them
and will continue to make it known,
so that the love with which you loved me
may be in them,
and so that I may be in them."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the prayers of your faithful
with the sacrificial offerings,
that through these acts of devotedness
we may pass over to the glory of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Father, I pray that they may be one
as we also are one, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Hear us, O God our Saviour,
and grant us confidence,
that through these sacred mysteries
there will be accomplished in the body of the
whole Church
what has already come to pass in Christ her
Head.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

The friend who can be silent with us in
a moment of despair or confusion, who
can stay with us in an hour of grief and
bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing,
not healing, not curing: that is a friend who
cares.

Henri Nouwen