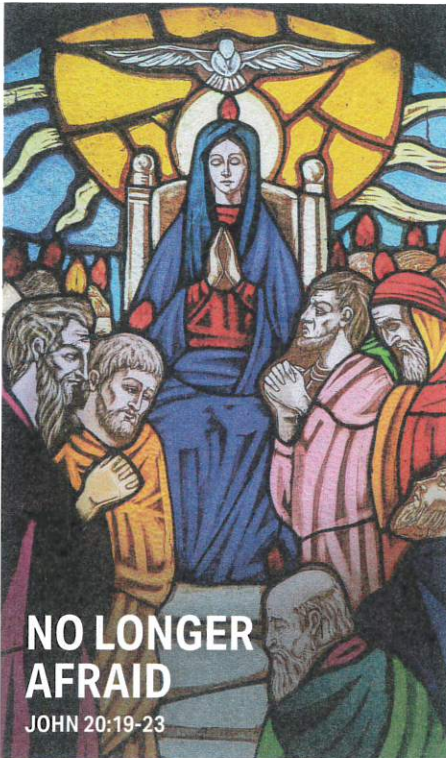


Sunday Message

PENTECOST SUNDAY

THE WORD

Year A • 24 May 2026 • Psalter Week 4



**NO LONGER
AFRAID**

JOHN 20:19-23

Today's first reading and Gospel give sharply contrasting accounts of the dramatic events of Pentecost Sunday. The first reading from St Luke's Acts of the Apostles is dramatic – full of noise and activity. John's Gospel account is more restrained.

It describes how Jesus appears among his frightened disciples, comforts them with a word of warning, assures them that it is indeed he by showing his hands and side, and gently breathes the Spirit on them.

Luke emphasises the energetic power of the Spirit that even physically shakes the house they are in. John suggests the creation of the first human being by having the Lord breathe on the apostles.

Luke stresses the importance of preaching the word, whereas John focuses on the importance of the forgiveness of sins. While both are essential to the mission of Jesus, Luke may be focusing on the Church's public role of addressing society, while John emphasises the more personal role of bringing people to know that their sins are forgiven.

Jesus calls the Spirit the 'Paraclete', the one we can call to our aid when the darkness frightens us or when sin seems to cling too closely to us. The Holy Spirit is our strength. ■

REFLECT

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the sacrament of confirmation "gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross".

After Jesus' passion and death, the apostles cowered behind locked doors, full of fear. Their fear had cut them off from the world. Then, Jesus appeared in their midst, and their fear turned to joy.

Jesus breathed on them, filled them with his life, with God's life – with confidence, hope, conviction, power. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they became new people. With new courage, they went out into the streets, unafraid to preach the Good News, ready even to give up their lives for it.

A book that made a major impression on me as a theology student is Albert Nolan's *Jesus before Christianity*. Nolan focuses on Jesus the man. He shows how Jesus of Nazareth was deeply involved with the real problems of his time. Jesus could have joined one of the major religious groups like the Pharisees or scribes or a political group like the Zealots. Instead, he took his lead from John the Baptist, a radical preacher on the fringes of society. He identified with those on the street – the poor, the broken, the sinner, the excluded.

Jesus preached a message of love and inclusion, forgiveness and compassion. He made those in authority feel uncomfortable. They heard the Good News as bad news, whereas the poor and the

broken welcomed it as good news. Jesus not only preached the good news of the reign of God, he also practised what he preached. Jesus' lifestyle was in keeping with the message he proclaimed.

Theologian Fr Tomas Halik says that whenever there was tension between the religious authorities and the ritualistic religion of his day and its prophetic critics, Jesus always sided with the prophets. Jesus always took a prophetic stand. Remember when he upset the moneychangers in the Temple? No wonder the religious authorities wanted rid of him. He threatened their position. He was dangerous. His words about the destruction of the Temple and the priestly temple religion cost him his life.

Jesus' death was the inevitable consequence of the life he lived. But God vindicated him by raising him from the dead. The resurrection is the definitive way in which the Father says: This is my Son, my beloved. Listen to him. Imitate him. Follow his way of being human.

This is what Jesus commissioned his followers to do before he left them, what he asks of us, too. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are to be his witnesses in our time and place.

This isn't an easy task today. Many don't want to hear from us. We can be tempted to stay silent, afraid to raise our heads. We can be reluctant to be a prophetic voice. But we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and so have been given all the courage we need. ■

LEARN

The fruits of the Holy Spirit, as listed by St Paul in his letter to the Galatians 5:22, are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to Catholic Tradition, are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.

SAY

"Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth."

PRAY

Pentecost is the feast of the birthday of the Church. It is the day when we celebrate the beginning of the Church's mission, the birth of a new community. Pray that Christians everywhere may witness to the Gospel with new confidence and courage.

DO

Recall your Confirmation day. Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to help you proclaim your faith courageously.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world
and that which contains all things
understands what is said, alleluia.*

Or

*The love of God has been poured into our hearts
through the Spirit of God dwelling within us, alleluia.*

COLLECT

O God, who by the mystery of today's great feast sanctify your whole Church in every people and nation, pour out, we pray, the gifts of the Holy Spirit across the face of the earth and, with the divine grace that was at work when the Gospel was first proclaimed, fill now once more the hearts of believers. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Acts 2:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, the Apostles were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and 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 Arabians – we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 104(103):1ab, 24ac, 29b-30, 31, 34. R. cf. 30

R: Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.

Or *Alleluia.*

1. Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, how great you are!
How many are your works, O LORD!
The earth is full of your creatures. **R.**
2. You take away their breath, they die,
returning to the dust from which they came.
You send forth your spirit, and 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 will rejoice in the LORD. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. Brothers and sisters: No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all 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 one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

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

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL John 20:19-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And 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 withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that, as promised by your Son,
the Holy Spirit may reveal to us more abundantly
the hidden mystery of this sacrifice
and graciously lead us into all truth.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and spoke of the marvels of God, alleluia.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who bestow heavenly gifts upon your Church,
safeguard, we pray, the grace you have given,
that the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon her
may retain all its force
and that this spiritual food
may gain her abundance of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**