

OPENING COLLECT

God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Acts 2.1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² 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. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³ But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.' ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious ²¹ Then

The readings for Pentecost, or Whitsun, need very little explanation, at one level, for they are well known and the obvious choices! And yet, of course, they can raise questions for us, if we allow this. The Acts' account of the coming of the Spirit, in the Upper Room, forty days after the Resurrection, contrasts with John's account of Jesus appearing soon after the resurrection, breathing on them and saying "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20.22). What unites both passages is the conviction that, though Jesus may have gone (their leader, guru and guide departed) the disciples experienced the power of God in their lives, when they took up their task. For Luke, who, as the likely writer of Acts, records the Ascension of Christ twice (Acts 2), the coming of the Spirit on the prayerful disciples, issues in their confident preaching of the Gospel. The babble of languages of Genesis (chapter 11) is reversed, and the Good News is heard by all. The prophecy of Joel, in chapter 2, ("I will pour out my spirit on all flesh") is thus fulfilled, and salvation comes to all people (v.21). The Spirit is there for all; waiting to change lives. Pentecost is a gift but also a challenge!

In the alternative reading (Numbers 11.24-30) God sends the spirit on 70 Elders, selected by Moses to help him lead the people along the right way, and even those not present are blessed.

Continued:

everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Or Numbers 11.24–30

24 Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. 26 Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp.

27 And a young man ran and told Moses, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ 28 And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, ‘My lord Moses, stop them!’ 29 But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!’ 30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12.3b–13

3 No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 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. 13 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.

Epistle notes:

The pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh brings the renewed ‘People of God’ into being. The Gospel is proclaimed and, as Acts goes on to show, many are baptised, the young Church grows and the growing community develops a way of life, which is admired by many. Paul’s description of this ‘way of life’, in this Epistle passage, is, again, so well known as to need little comment. Perhaps it is good to notice, however, its inclusiveness. If, as Christian communities, we try to define exactly who is in and who is out, we may limit the power of the Spirit to build up the People of God into an effective fighting force for God. An effective community needs all the gifts it can get or, to put it another way, look around you and realise the riches God has placed within your community!

Gospel notes: John’s account of ‘Pentecost’ is different from Luke’s, in Acts, but it has the same thrust. John’s Gospel is tied strongly to the Genesis creation narrative, and, here, the breathing of Jesus on the disciples seems to parallel

Gospel: John 20.19–23

19 It was evening on the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’
Or- John 7.37-39

the breathing of life into ‘man’ at creation. It also echoes the breathing of life, by God, into the army of bones, brought together in the vision of Ezekiel, in chapter 37. However, the most important thing, in your writer’s estimation, is that Jesus then says “As the Father sent me, so I send you”. Enlivened by the power of God, we are to take up the work of Jesus in the new post-resurrection world, the new age of life eternal. As the alternative Gospel (John 7.37-9) says, through those who drink living water, living water will flow!

Post-Communion Collect

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal: open our lips by your Spirit that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.