



PENTECOST SUNDAY

Year C

Acts 2:1-11
Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34
1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
John 20:19-23

Gathering

(A large white unlit candle, a collection of unlit tea candles, one for each member, and a birthday card rest on a table covered with a red cloth.)

In this week's gospel, Jesus bestows the Holy Spirit on his fearful disciples. Last week we reflected on Jesus' prayer that "all may be one." How did you live as a *uniter* rather than a *divider* this past week?

Prayer

(The large candle is lit by the leader; the individual members light the tea candles. The community waits in silence, attending to the presence of the Spirit. After a time of quiet, the prayer continues as follows. To each invocation, members respond, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.")

Leader: Let us pray for the gifts of the Spirit.

To one is given the word of wisdom by the Spirit. To another the word of knowledge by the Spirit.

To another faith by the same Spirit. To another gifts of healings by the same Spirit.

To another the working of miracles by the Spirit. To another prophecy by the Spirit.

To another discerning of spirits by the same Spirit. To another different kinds of tongues by the same Spirit. To another the interpretation of tongues by the same Spirit.

All: The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as he wills.

Adapted from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

(A selection of reflective instrumental music is played.)

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

In last week's Lukan gospel for the feast of the Ascension, we heard Jesus invoke scripture to remind his disciples that the Christ would suffer and

that the mercy of God would be proclaimed in his name to all nations. But Jesus also told them to wait until they had been “clothed with power from on high”. In the reading from Luke’s Acts this week, we witness the Spirit filling them with the power to speak of “the mighty acts of God.”

In this week’s gospel, however, John plots the narrative a little differently. His account of the giving of the Spirit takes place on “the evening of *that* first day of the week.” In John, *that* first day is the day Mary of Magdala discovered the empty tomb. It is *that* evening, John tells, us that Jesus fulfills the promise of the Spirit that he had made, as John narrates it, in his *farewell* to the disciples the night before he died (Jn: 14:16; 15:26).

John tells us that the disciples were locked up in a room too fearful to do anything. They were paralyzed by the devastating events of the week before. Dark life experiences have the same impact on us. When we sense God asking us to do something difficult, we may also become paralyzed by fear.

When Jesus enters the room, he offers his peace; the disciples rejoice in his presence. He bestows the Holy Spirit upon them; he charges them as missionaries of forgiveness. But does this dispel all their fear? Probably not. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, that encouraged the disciples to fulfill their mission in spite of their fear. Courage is not the absence of fear but the ability to take action in the face of, and in spite of, fear. Christ’s Spirit is poured out on us all. When we face challenges or difficult situations in our lives, the Holy Spirit encourages us to persevere – even while we might still be afraid.

How powerful is the Holy Spirit? Only the Holy Spirit could encourage a few simple, uneducated, ordinary disciples to change the world and become the foundation upon which the Church was built. We celebrate our birthday as church on this feast of Pentecost. Through 2,000 years and many struggles and challenges our church endures. The Spirit lives and breathes still – in our church, in each of us. Courage!

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ When were you not able to act because of fear?
- ◆ How has responding to some call from God increased your faith or made a difference in your life?
- ◆ What has kept you from responding to some call you sensed was from

God?

- ◆ When have you acted confidently because you knew God’s Spirit was with you?

HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you hear Christ saying to us in hearing and sharing his word?” “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Visit the website of the Franciscan Friars of Atonement (www.atonementfriars.org/) to view their **Journey towards Unity**.
- ◆ Create a story journal for yourself. Take twenty minutes some day this week to reflect on how responding to a call from the Lord has affected your faith and formed your life.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, the leader begins and members follow, praying in two groups.)

Peaceful In His Love

Leader: We are rich
Who are clothed
In the garment of righteousness
Woven in truth

I: At Pentecost
We are as consuming fire
Like flames on ancient hilltops
We are aglow

II: Red-robed in sovereignty
Crowned from above
The Spirit rests upon us
Peaceful in His love

Veritas. Poetry, Prayer, and Praise

All: Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; as it
was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)