

Sunday, May 11, 2008
Day of Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

Today's festival derives its name from the Jewish festival of Pentecost, observed fifty days after Passover. On the fiftieth day of Easter we celebrate the Holy Spirit as the power of God among us that heals, forgives, inspires, and unites. In the reading from Acts, images of wind and fire describe the Spirit poured out on disciples of all nations. In John's gospel the risen Christ breathes the Spirit on his followers on Easter evening. In the one Spirit we are baptized into one body, and at the Lord's table the Spirit unites us for witness in the world.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people
by sending into us your Holy Spirit.
Direct us by the light of that Spirit,
that we may have a right judgment in all things
and rejoice at all times in your peace,
through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

READINGS

Acts 2:1–21
Numbers 11:24–30 (Alternate)
Psalm 104:24–34, 35b
Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth. (Ps. 104:30)
1 Corinthians 12:3b–13
Acts 2:1–21 (Alternate)
John 20:19–23
John 7:37–39 (Alternate)

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1–21

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival that marked the fiftieth day after Passover. Luke portrays the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the disciples before the gathered and astonished people assembled in Jerusalem for the festival. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples were able to witness to the power of Christ's resurrection.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs — in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In 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.
¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
 and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
 and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' \

FIRST READING (ALTERNATE): Numbers 11:24–30

The Spirit of God rested upon seventy elders in Israel who had been chosen to share the burden of leadership with Moses. When some became jealous that two others also had the spirit and could prophesy, Moses said that he hoped that all of God's people would be prophets.

²⁴So 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. ²⁵Then 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.

²⁶Two 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. ²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" ²⁹But 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!" ³⁰And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Psalm 104:25–35, 37

²⁵O LORD, how manifold ^l are your works!*
 In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full ^l of your creatures.
²⁶Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too man- ^l y to number,*
 creatures both ^l small and great.
²⁷There move the ships, and there is ^l that Leviathan,*
 which you have made for the ^l sport of it.
²⁸All of them ^l look to you*
 to give them their food ^l in due season.
²⁹You give it to them; they ^l gather it;*
 you open your hand, and they are filled ^l with good things.
³⁰You hide your face, and ^l they are terrified;*
 you take away their breath, and they die and return ^l to their dust.
³¹You send forth your Spirit, and they ^l are created;*
 and so you renew the face ^l of the earth.
³²May the glory of the LORD en- ^l dure forever;*
 may the LORD rejoice in ^l all his works.
³³He looks at the earth ^l and it trembles;*
 he touches the mountains ^l and they smoke.
³⁴I will sing to the LORD as long ^l as I live;*
 I will praise my God while I ^l have my being.
³⁵May these words ^l of mine please him;*
 I will rejoice ^l in the LORD.
³⁷Bless the LORD, ^l O my soul.*
^l Hallelujah!

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:3b–13

Paul is helping the Corinthians understand the relationship between our God-given unity and Spirit-created diversity. The Spirit creates the unity of faith and gives all Christians diverse gifts for the common benefit of all. We need one another's diverse spiritual gifts, because the same Spirit has given them to each person for the common good.

^{3b}And no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to 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. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For 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. ¹³For 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.

SECOND READING (ALTERNATE): Acts 2:1–21

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GOSPEL: John 20:19–23

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them a benediction, a commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, 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."
²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

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