

Quotations

1

Our task, as image-bearing, God-loving, Christ-shaped, Spirit-filled Christians, following Christ and shaping our world, is to announce redemption to the world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to the world that has discovered its fallenness, to announce healing to the world that has discovered its brokenness, to proclaim love and trust to the world that knows only exploitation, fear and suspicion.

The Challenge of Easter / N. T. Wright. 2009

2

The history of Christendom is the history of an operation. It is an operation of the Holy Ghost towards Christ, under the conditions of our humanity; and it was our humanity which gave the signal, as it were, for that operation. The visible beginning of the Church is at Pentecost, but that is only a result of its actual beginning—and ending—in heaven.

The descent of the dove: a short history of the Holy Spirit in the church
/ Charles Williams. 1939

Related topics

For further study:

Mystery of the church; resurrection / ascension / Pentecost; paschal mystery; ministry in the church; sacraments; symbols of the church; evangelisation

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Common Worship · Additional Collects · Pentecost

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Pentecost

Principal Service readings

Acts 2.1-21	Peter speaks to the people at Pentecost
or Numbers 11.24-30	The spirit given to the elders
Psalm 104.25-35,37	The wonders of creation
Acts 2.1-21	Peter speaks to the people at Pentecost
or 1 Corinthians 12.3b-13	Many gifts of the one Spirit
John 20.19-23	Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples
or John 7.37-39	'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

First Reading

The Day of Pentecost

¹ 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:

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.

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."

Acts 2.1-21 NRSV¹

Gospel Reading

Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples

¹⁹It 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.' 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.'

John 20.19-23 NRSV

Comments and Questions

Luke gives a very dramatic and public account of the gift of the Holy Spirit being bestowed at Pentecost. Having been huddled together in apprehension and fear, the disciples are now impelled to go out and to

share the good news to an international crowd in Jerusalem. So many people have gathered in Jerusalem, swelling its normal population by about three times, because of this feast. The term Pentecost comes from the Greek Πεντηκοστή (Pentēkostē) meaning 'fiftieth'. It refers to a harvest festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, also known as the 'Feast of Weeks' and the 'Feast of 50 days' in rabbinic tradition. In Exodus 34.22 it is called the 'firstfruits of the wheat harvest'. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit on this occasion gave it a whole new meaning.

The coming of the Holy Spirit, essentially an invisible event, is accompanied by various sights and sounds. There is the 'mighty rushing wind' which makes a noise. Tongues of fire appear on the apostles (representing light, warmth, power), and the apostles become animated by *glossolalia*, speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. These 'other languages' or 'tongues' have divided critics – some think they are ecstatic utterances, others that they are the multiple languages of the apostles themselves. A crowd gathers, attracted by the commotion, and everyone seems to be able to hear what the apostles are saying in their own language – a reference to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1–9), where a division of language was caused and people then couldn't understand each other. People in Jerusalem are amazed at what is happening, and Peter takes the opportunity to address the crowd. He quotes Joel 2.28–32 and Psalm 16 to indicate that first Pentecost marks the start of the Messianic Age. The pouring out of the Spirit is obviously having an effect on the disciples because people assume they must be drunk. Peter says that it is the beginning of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit 'on all flesh', Jew and Gentile alike (2.39).

In John's gospel, the resurrection, the pouring out of the Spirit, and the sending out of the disciples occur on the same day, the day of resurrection. Perhaps this is more realistic than Luke's account. It is a less dramatic and more intimate account. There is a greater sense of connection, of relationship in it. There are two emphases in the reading: peace and forgiveness. Having breathed the Spirit on the disciples he commissions them for the ministry of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the path to fellowship and unity.

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