



## Things to Ponder

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## Solemnity of Pentecost – Luke 2:1-11 (Acts of Apostles) John 20:19-23

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### Introduction: Passing the Baton: Now It's Our Turn

Pentecost is a dramatic moment in the liturgical year when the Spirit of God, aflame with his fire, fills the universe and tells of a new heaven and a new earth. This is a time when the Church comes alive with a new breath. As the Church's birthday, Pentecost releases passion and energy to the followers of Jesus and his Way of Life. Something new is being born in our midst. Be attentive!

This Sunday we are blessed with two accounts of Pentecost, but one reality. The dramatic story of Pentecost is found in the Acts of the Apostles – the first reading. The account in John's Gospel also recounts how Jesus gave the gifts of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Yet, the event in John's Gospel takes place on Easter Sunday. There is no need to try to reconcile these two accounts for both are two different ways of describing the same reality. It is to know that after his death, Jesus fulfilled his promise to send his disciples an Advocate, who would enable them to be witnesses throughout the world. Actual time and place are not important.

Pentecost is *mission*. "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." The baton is being passed. Now it's our turn to do what Jesus himself came to do. *You and I have a job to do. Are we up to the task?*

Pentecost is *power*. "And suddenly there came a noise – like a strong, driving wind, and it filled the entire house." The Hebrew word *ruah* means breath, wind, or spirit. In fact, the opening words of both the book of Genesis and John's Gospel speak of a beginning. It is clear that God is creating the disciples—and us—*anew*. This Spirit, this new Breath, will provide the powers to continue Jesus' ministry. *Do we believe that we have been empowered? Created anew?*

Pentecost is *gifts*. The Spirit is the source of the special *gifts* (or "charisms") which each member of the faith community receives – gifts not given as a personal grace for oneself. Rather they are special abilities by which one serves the needs of the community. We are all called to work together, using our gifts, to build up the community to which we belong. *How are you using your gifts?*

Especially on Pentecost 2021, our two beautiful, inspiring, and hope-filled Scripture readings reminds us once again of the Holy Spirit's rallying cry (plea?) to overcome

today's divisions of race, class, and gender. Through our baptism into one faith community and our confirmation to be doers of God's Word, we possess the power, wisdom, and spirit to build the beloved community among us.

Pentecost this year is a remembrance of names. We are named, each with our individual names, and also with that familiar name: Child of God. We have names. We have beauty. Together, we share a name: Christ-followers. Through the Spirit, a new, inclusive human family is struggling to be born in our midst. Pentecost 2021. A glorious day to hope and dream. Let's begin. You and I have work to do.

*"If you are what you should be, you will set the world ablaze!" - St. Catherine of Siena*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from both readings for this feast day: Luke 2:1-11 (Acts of Apostles) John 20:19-23

What word or words caught your attention?

What in these passages comforted you?

What in these passages challenged you?

What gifts have been given to you?

What gifts have been given to our parish family?

### **Further Reflections on Solemnity of Pentecost:**

"We have good news for a world that is growing weary of division, hatred, and negativity. It is the saving message of a God who is with us, who brings good out of all situations, and who loves us unconditionally. It is the good news of a God whose Spirit empowers us to bring light to the dark places of this world and hope to those who despair. Our God leads us out of confinement, out of fear, to embrace new possibilities." – Father Douglas Sousa

On this particular Sunday, five powerful words could sum of the meaning of this feast day we celebrate, Pentecost.

Let the Word go forth!

For in the dramatic events of that first Pentecost, when the bewildered and excited disciples poured out into the streets, they had one purpose in mind: to let the Word go forth. And it did!

What began with a few frightened people in a darkened room in Jerusalem (similar to our stay-at-home isolation?) has spilled out and touched every corner of the globe. You'll find the Word preached in every language—just as on that very first Pentecost—and understood in billions of hearts.

And it all began on this day to celebrate, Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. You and I need, especially this year when we are facing so many painful challenges, to keep the Word going— to remind ourselves of the rugged beginnings of this rugged faith and to carry it on—just as the first believers did. We simply need to throw open the windows of fear and uncertainty—to let in the light—and to let the Word go forth. Yes. This is a daunting task. But you

and I do not undertake it alone. We have the Holy Spirit.

The Risen Jesus penetrated the disciples' defenses and security systems, overcame their fears, and sent them forth. *Do I have this sense of being sent?*

Two thousand years ago, those first Christians cleared the path, and often died trying, so that we could walk in their footsteps – walk the Way of the Spirit in our world family today.

So today, dare to ask the question: Where will those footsteps take us? Who will carry the flame, the torch of faith? Who will build bridges of understanding and acceptance among all God's children? Who will be the healers? Who?

So this Pentecost, go ahead. Strike a match. Set the world ablaze. And let the Word go forth!

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