

## Readings for Pentecost Sunday

### Acts 2: 1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly, there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement, they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans, and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

### John 14: 23-31

At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. “I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name—he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you. Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away, and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me.

## **The Symbols of The Presence and Actions of The Holy Spirit**

Ave Maria Catholic Church. May 28, 2023. Fr. David M Vidal

On the Solemnity of Pentecost, we celebrate a foundational truth of our faith: *“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son, he's worshipped and glorified.”*

Then, the Pentecost Sequence, VENI SANCTE SPIRITUS, reminds us that we must invoke with faith and with persistence: *“Come, O Holy Spirit, send us a ray of your light . . . Perfect Comforter, give us your sweet relief, rest in fatigue and consolation in suffering. Give us your power because, without it, there is nothing in us; nothing is without sin!”*

### **How do we describe the Presence and the Actions of the Holy Spirit?**

The presence and actions of the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity are difficult to grasp as part of God’s hidden and invisible mystery. The Holy Spirit is Love. Saint Thomas Aquinas says: *“The name Love is the proper name of the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Son mutually love one another. And from this mutual love the Holy Spirit proceeds.”* (*Summa theologiae*, q. 37 a. 1).

Now, we can illustrate this Mystery of Love through symbols. Because of our weak comprehension of knowledge, we must look for material things to help us understand invisible and spiritual realities.

Then, symbols come to our aid. Let us try to present the presence and actions of the Holy Spirit, with the images of Wind, of the Dove, and of Fire.

### **The Image of Wind.**

The image of wind is central to the Pentecost experience: *“And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house where they were gathered (with Mary),”* (Acts 2:2).

In Biblical texts, the wind was often presented as a person who comes and goes. Jesus speaks of it in his conversation with Nicodemus when he uses the example of the wind to teach about the action of the Holy Spirit: *“The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit,”* (Jn 3:8).

The symbol of the wind illustrates the supernatural action through which God transforms people from within and sanctifies them. After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Apostles, and *“He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit,’”* (Jn 20:22-23). Then, He gave them the power to forgive sins.

### **The Image of the Dove.**

Another image that reveals the presence and actions of the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity is the figure of the Dove. According to the Gospels, the image of a Dove was manifested during the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan.

The Evangelists speak of the dove in almost identical terms. Matthew writes (3:16): *"The heavens opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him" (that is, upon Jesus)*. Mark (1:10), Luke (3:21-22), and John (1:32) contain similar dialogue.

In the Old Testament, the dove was the messenger of God's reconciliation with humanity during the time of Noah. The dove gave this patriarch the news that the flood which covered the entire face of the earth was coming to an end. (See Gn 8:9-11).

Therefore, we can see this image as a foretaste of the image of the action of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit, who is Love, "pouring out this love in human hearts", as St. Paul says (Rom 5:5), is also the giver of peace and reconciliation.

### **The Image of Fire.**

Finally, the image of fire also indicates the presence and the action of the Holy Spirit. We know that John the Baptist proclaimed at the Jordan: *"He (that is, Christ) will baptize you with the Spirit and fire,"* (Mt 3:11).

While it is true that fire is a source of warmth and light, we must also be conscious of the fact that it can be an immensely destructive force. The Gospels speak of "throwing into the fire" the tree that bears no fruit. (Mt 3:10; Jn 15:6) Scripture also speaks of "burning the chaff in unquenchable fire," (Mt 3:12).

Baptism "in the Spirit and fire" exhibits the fire's purifying power: a mysterious fire that creates holiness and purity.

Jesus Himself said: *"I have come to set the earth on fire; and how I wish that it were already blazing!"* (Lk 12:49). In this example, we are dealing with the fire of God's love, of that love which *"has been poured out in our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit"* (Rom 5:5).

When on the day of Pentecost, "tongues of fire" appeared upon the heads of the Apostles, they signified that the Spirit brought the gift of participation in the saving love of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that “the fire which Jesus brought to the earth is "a kind of participation in the Holy Spirit" (*participatio quaedam Spiritus Sancti, Summa theologiae, II-II, q. 23, a. 3*).

With the *Pentecost Sequence*, let us invoke with faith and perseverance the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

*Come, Holy Spirit, send forth the heavenly radiance of your light. Come, father of the poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of the heart. O most blessed light, fill the inmost heart of your faithful. Bend that which is inflexible, fire that which is chilled, correct what goes astray. Grant the reward of virtue, grant the deliverance of salvation, grant eternal joy. Amen*