

## Sunday 31 May 2020 Pentecost

**COLLECT** God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**FIRST READING** Acts 2:1-21. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But 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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: '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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

### Or Numbers 11:24-30

PSALM 104:25-35. 37 **R** Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth. O Lord, how manifold are your works! in wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. **R** Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number, creatures both small and great. There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan, which you have made for the sport of it. **R** All of them look to you to give them their food in due season. You give it to them, they gather it; you open your hand and they are filled with good things. You hide your face and they are terrified; you take away their breath and they die and return to their dust. **R** You send forth your Spirit and they are created; and so you renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; may the Lord rejoice in all his works. He looks at the earth and it trembles; he touches the mountains and they smoke. **R** I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being. May these words of mine please him; I will rejoice in the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Alleluia! **R**

**SECOND READING** 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13. No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to 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. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For 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. For 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.

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

**Or John 7:37-39**

**POST COMMUNION** Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal: open our lips by your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Sunday Homily 31 MAY 2020 PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**"Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22**

For years ecologists have lobbied governments to invest in renewable energy sources, conscious of the finite nature of earth's resources of fuel. Experiments have taken place harnessing the energy of the tides, using it to power generators, producing electricity for heat and light. The sun is already the principal source of energy for our planet, and scientists are constantly devising new ways of using its energy in the factory, street and home. Wind farms utilise each gust of wind to turn giant rotor arms, echoing the action of windmills, widely used by previous generations for a variety of tasks. Energy is all around us, energy sustains us, energy changes us – energy is life. In years gone by people would hold a mirror to the mouth of a dying person. If there was breath, it would form a mist on the mirror and would show that the person was still alive. The "kiss of life" would be more appropriately designated the "breath of life". The shortage of earth's resources has made us more conscious of what saves and sustains life, and the best example of energy indicating life is in the breath of each living person.

The risen Jesus breathed on the disciples, a sign that he was sharing his life, his energy, with them. As he breathed on them he said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." The very energy and life of God was being given to them; but no one can receive the Spirit of God and remain unchanged. The disciples discovered they were able to speak in foreign tongues. They found a courage they had never known before in preaching the Good News, and they lived in a unity that only weeks before would have seemed like a dream. With the energy of God flowing through them, they showed new life and growth. This new life of the Spirit had come to them when they were at their lowest ebb, shut away in a room, paralysed by fear, confused and disillusioned. The breath of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, was indeed new life, energy and growth, and its gift did not simply confer new life on the disciples, but the life of Christ. In a new way Christ came close to his disciples, calling them together in communion, sending them far and wide on his mission. With his Spirit living in them the disciples became, in a new way, his people, his messengers, his body. Wherever they were, he would be, too, and this gift of the Spirit is with his disciples in every age.

It is an enriching exercise to become aware of the energy and life in the people and the world around us. Everything we encounter is imbued with life, a life so wonderful and mysterious and complex that it defies scientific definition. The movement of the earth around the sun, the spinning of our planet, which brings us night and day, the breath of the wind across the face of the earth, the warmth of fire, the radiance of light, growing plants and flowing streams: all are signs of an energy which gives and sustains life. Awareness of this energy and life creates awareness of the Holy Spirit of God, who moves around freely, giving life and growth to the world and the potential for peace, forgiveness and love among its people. Becoming aware of the Spirit, we become attuned to it, sensing its presence and opening ourselves to its power, to live in accordance with its force for good. We start to live in that same energy which caused the heavens and earth to be made. We, like the disciples, become energised for the work of God and dynamic messengers of the Good News. The Christian messenger does not simply bring Christ to others, but identifies the presence of God

already in existence. We demonstrate that where there is goodness, it is Christ's goodness; where there is healing and forgiveness, it is Christ's healing and forgiveness. We show people where Christ is already active in their lives and in this way, in concert with the Holy Spirit, we build up the body of Christ. What tremendous energy was released on that first Pentecost! What tremendous energy is still released into the Church by the Holy Spirit so that we, today's disciples, may work in communion with each other, renewing the face of the earth.