

June 8, 2025

Pentecost

John 7:37-39; John 14:15-16, 23-26; and John 20:19-23

The Church offers options for Gospel readings for the Feast of Pentecost. The first, John 7:37-39, is for the Vigil Mass, and John 20:19-23 is the most frequent choice for Masses during the day.

John 7:37-39 (For the Vigil Mass)

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'" He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Background:

Because Pentecost is the last day of the Easter Season, this reading is especially appropriate. In the early church, Pentecost was the day when those who could not be baptized during the Easter Vigil were baptized. By making sure the baptism was a communal celebration and part of the public life of the entire community, it placed the emphasis on the communal aspect of baptism,

This Gospel text is very short. The feast that is referred to in the first verse is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. It was the third and the most favored festival in the Jewish community. All men were expected to participate. During the feast, simple structures were built that reminded the people of their dwellings during their sojourn in the desert. The roof was typically covered with branches that would block the sun during the day but could be removed so that one could see the stars at night. The feast was celebrated when most of the harvest had been gathered. Each night the people gathered around an altar waving palm branches, and the priest poured water that was brought from the pool of Siloam, thanking God for the rain that produced the harvest and the water that flowed from the rock into the desert. It was on the last day of this festival that Jesus stood and declared that he was the living water, and invited all to come to him.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you know about your own baptism? Why were you given your name, who were your godparents, and why were they chosen? What other details about your baptism do you know?
2. Do you have memories of being thirsty, or without access to water?
3. Do you also have memories of water providing life?
4. Do you have significant experiences of water, oceans, lakes, streams, ice, snow, and being present to water?
5. What other references to God as the provider of water do you recall?
6. Have you ever spent some time praying with the sense of God as the creator and provider of water?
7. What significance does it have for you when Jesus is standing up and proclaiming, "Let anyone who thirsts, come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as scripture says; 'Rivers of living water will flow from him'"?
8. What does the Gospel text say to you personally? Can you talk to God about your response to this text, whatever that may be?

John 20:19-23 (For the feast day)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. 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." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Background:

This daytime Gospel text for Pentecost is also from John's Gospel. The text presents a different kind of experience of the Holy Spirit than is found in the Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11 (the first reading for Masses during the day). Here in the Gospel, even though the disciples have gathered in fear, they are sent out just as the Father sent Jesus himself. The presence of the risen Lord is not impeded by the physical restraint of a locked door, or by their fears. The crucified Jesus stands in their midst and greets them with, "peace." This greeting of peace is also a familiar prayer for health, prosperity, and all good that comes with the end times. Jesus breathes on them the Holy Spirit--an action that mirrors God breathing life into Adam in Genesis. The disciples receive the power to both bind and forgive sins, an expression that names two extremes but is intended to communicate the full range of power between those extremes. In John's Gospel, sin is defined as the refusal to accept Jesus and his teaching. By asking the disciples to be agents of forgiveness, he is commissioning them to reach out to those who have rejected him and his teachings. The reader might think of energy that is present when two opposites are brought together and the new energy that is released.

Many may associate the forgiving of sins with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, in the early Church, forgiveness of sin was associated with Baptism, not the sacrament of Reconciliation. Here the reconciliation that Jesus is commissioning the disciples to be about is much larger than the personal forgiveness of individual sins. In the Gospels Jesus often approaches sin and healing in way that recognizes the effect forgiveness/healing have on one's relationship to the community. Jesus told the ten lepers go show themselves to the priest so that they could be reinstated in the community, or he spoke to the woman at the well and the whole community was transformed by her testimony. Forgiving in this sense is about restoring the fullness of the relationship.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you lock doors? Do you check to make sure they are locked at night or when you leave?
2. Are there parts of your life that you keep locked away?
3. Have you or someone you know well had the experience of being refused forgiveness by a parent, a priest, or someone they loved? How did that affect them?
4. Do you know persons who have dealt honestly with a difficult part of their life? How has that changed them, and their relationships with others, and with God?
5. Where do you encounter your own fears? Which of your fears are you grateful for? Which of your fears would you like to be free of?
6. When have you found that God/Jesus was standing in your midst? What was that like?
7. When have you been moved by a passage of scripture, something someone said, the lyric of a song or poem, nature, or a personal experience? Do you attribute those experiences to the presence of the Holy Spirit? What does this awareness or lack of it say to you?
8. In the Gospel, Jesus breathed on the disciples the breath of life, and told them they had the power to forgive and to bind sins. Can you take some time to talk to God about God's desire to give this power to his disciples, and to you?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscc-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for Pentecost Sunday – June 8, 2025 – Mass during the Day
There are options for both the second reading and the Gospel.

Suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house. There appeared tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. There were devout Jews from every nation 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 asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. Bless the Lord, O my soul!
You are great indeed! How manifold are your works, O Lord! the earth is full of your creatures;
May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord be glad in his works!
If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; the same God produces all of them in everyone. To each the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Or: Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever has the Spirit of Christ belongs to him. If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive. Consequently, we are not to live according to the flesh. If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you received a Spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, "Abba, Father!" We are children of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." Then he showed them his hands and his side. 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." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Or: Jesus said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always. "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will make our dwelling with him. 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 whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you."

Excerpts: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1-34; 1 Cor 12:3-13; Romans 8:8-17; John 20:19-23; John 14:15-26

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for June 8th, Pentecost Sunday, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. On Pentecost Sunday, there are two choices, both from John, for the Gospel, and two choices for the second reading. The most frequently used Gospel is the one from John's chapter 20, where on the day of his resurrection Jesus comes into the midst of his disciples in a locked room to show himself to them. He says to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathes on them and says to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The other readings also have direct references to their receiving of the Holy Spirit, and to the wonders that can be worked by those who so receive. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit arrives in a noise like strong wind, and tongues of fire. People from every nation gathered at the sound, and they were amazed because "We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." Psalm 104 exclaims, "May the Lord be glad in his works! When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." In the second reading, from the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; to each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

Like last Sunday, when we heard two versions of the Ascension story, this Sunday we hear two versions of the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit. One is from a closing chapter of John's Gospel; the other is from an opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. What is common to both is that a gift of new power is immediately bestowed, a power to influence and benefit others. Once again, the version from Acts is longer, more detailed, and descriptive in how this event affects these apostles just getting started on their mission, "as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!