Some thoughts for catechists

As we approach the Solemnity of Pentecost, celebrated this year on 9th June, perhaps it is timely to look again at what Pentecost means for us. As we know, Pentecost is the day on which we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles fifty days after the resurrection. Acts 2:1–4 describes what occurred:

> When Pentecost day came round, the apostles had all met in one room when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting, and something appeared to them like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

It is helpful to look a little at the background to this feast. Pentecost was originally a Jewish feast that brought Jews from many places to Jerusalem. It is called in Hebrew ‘Shavuot’, the Feast of the Weeks, and is the Jewish holiday celebrating the harvest season in Israel. Shavuot, which means ‘weeks’, refers to the timing of the festival which is held exactly 7 weeks after Passover. Shavuot is known also as Yom Habikkurim, or ‘the Day of the First Fruits’, because it is the time the farmers of Israel would bring their first harvest to Jerusalem as a token of thanksgiving. The Jewish feast drew large crowds from all over the Jewish world to Jerusalem – which is why Acts is able to say there were people in Jerusalem ‘from every nation under heaven,’ and the issue of many languages arises. The name Pentecost comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament and means ‘fiftieth’ as the Feast of Weeks is celebrated exactly 50 days after Passover. Pentecost would be the name by which Greek speaking Jews would have known the festival.

For us as Christians Pentecost refers to the 50th day after the Resurrection. We celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of gifts, the Church’s foundation, and the beginning of its mission to all nations and peoples. So for us as catechists we can help those with whom we work it is a time to reflect on not only the story of that event and its effect on the first apostles but the effect of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

The **seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit** are derived from the words of Isaiah 11:2–3 and are:

- Wisdom  
- Understanding  
- Knowledge  
- Right Judgment  
- Courage (or Fortitude)  
- Reverence (or Piety)  
- Wonder and Awe in God’s Presence (or Fear of the Lord)

The **Fruits of the Holy Spirit**, fruits borne through our response to the gifts, and described in Galatians 5:22–23, are:

- Love  
- Joy  
- Peace  
- Patience  
- Kindness  
- Goodness  
- Faithfulness  
- Gentleness  
- Self-control
The following prayer, taken from US parish website is both a beautiful prayer and a prayer which helps to open up an understanding of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. You may like to use it as it is or adapt it for a specific context.

**Come, Holy Spirit**

*Fill the hearts of your faithful people and fill them once again with the seven-fold gift of your presence.*

*Give them the gift of wisdom so that they can see with your eyes, hear with your ears, think with your mind, feel with your heart.*

*Give them the gift of understanding so that they can experience and judge life from the point of view of other people.*

*Give them the gift of right judgment so that they can share the story of their faith and thereby strengthen their fellow parishioners.*

*Give them the gift of courage so that they may stick to the task of living their faith and sharing the Gospel whether convenient or inconvenient.*

*Give them the gift of knowledge so that they can read the signs of the times and figure out how to respond in faith.*

*Give them the gift of reverence so that they can be true friends with you whether in prayer or in a good moral life.*

*Give them the gift of awe and wonder in your presence so that they can respond to your presence in church, at home, and on the street.*

*May these gifts bring about in our parish true conversion, honest community-building, and effective evangelisation.*

*May our response to your gifts bear fruit in our lives with an abundance of charity, joy, and kindness, patience, peace, and purity of heart, goodness, generosity, and gentleness, meekness, self-control, and faithfulness.*

*This we ask of you, Spirit of God, in the name of Christ Jesus for the honor and glory of God the Father.*

*Amen.*

(with permission of Parish of St Anthony of Padua, St Louis, Missouri)

Symbols of Pentecost - When we use visual symbols to help us in our catechesis it is important that we are reminded that Pentecost is more than merely an historical occasion of great importance in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, that is, in the life of each of us who are the Church. It is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is 'here', in us and through us.

Red – the colour of fire – is the liturgical colour of the feast. Perhaps we could ask the children in our groups, or even the whole parish, to wear something red on Pentecost Sunday.

The scriptural images of the Holy Spirit are the dove, fire and flame, wind. Most of us have cut out doves and tongues of flame with children, to write the children’s names on each flame is a reminder that each one of us is touched by the Holy Spirit as were the disciples. Balloons might be used to remind children of the Holy Spirit as wind or breath, or perhaps red, yellow and orange ribbons close to the wind of a fan.

Perhaps red carnations could be used symbolising the new life that had come to Church with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, blooming into something of great beauty.

In the Liturgy of the Word for Children there will be opportunities to develop things further. Perhaps percussion instruments, particularly shakers, could be used when the powerful wind from heaven comes.
Maybe a way of reflecting the many languages would be to ask all to say together a word of greeting – either various words in English (Hi, Hello, Welcome etc.) or in the languages that some may speak at home.

No doubt you all have ideas on how to open up and enter into the celebration of Pentecost. It would be good to be able to share those ideas and experiences and if you would be willing for other parishes to use and/or develop your ideas please e mail marycrowley@rcdow.org.uk