

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**Pentecost, Year A**  
**24 May 2026**  
**John 20:19-23**

### **Catechist Background**

In the languages that the Apostles spoke and the culture in which they lived, the concepts of 'sin' and 'peace' had different meanings than in English today. 'Sin' in John's Gospel is the failure to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. John would thus have struggled with the idea of there being many different sins. Also today, we link 'peace' with 'quietness' but that is not biblical: the first-century Holy Land was a crowded, noisy place, except for the wilderness. The Hebrew concept of 'shalom' (often translated as 'peace') denotes the rightness of a situation when you do not owe a debt or apology to anyone or to God. It means being debt-free in the widest sense. As Jesus made full atonement for us and for our sin (failure to recognise him), we can experience shalom.

The first Christian Pentecost took place fifty days after the Resurrection, during the Jewish feast of Pentecost. For Jews, Pentecost is a harvest feast held fifty days after Passover, and it celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses. So Jews travelled to Jerusalem to celebrate together (which is why there were many Jews from different regions in Jerusalem that day). As the Christian feast celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost has been called the birthday of the Church, but Pentecost is more than a birthday: the Church exists to bring the Good News to all, so when the Apostles received the Spirit, they didn't keep it to themselves but went and shared it with others.

Red is the liturgical colour for days associated with the Holy Spirit. It reminds us of how the Spirit appeared 'like tongues of fire', and it also reminds us of blood and so it is the colour for feasts of the martyrs, and Palm Sunday and Good Friday (when we hear the Passion).

### **We Say Sorry**

*Leader:* You send us out to forgive, Lord have mercy.

*All:* **Lord, have mercy.**

*Leader:* You free us from fear, Christ have mercy.

*All:* **Christ, have mercy.**

*Leader:* You came to bring us peace, Lord have mercy.

*All:* **Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

Lord, may the Holy Spirit you sent after Jesus' resurrection continue to guide us today. Amen.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel** John 20:19-23

### **Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children**

Today's Gospel reading uses the words 'peace' and 'sin' differently from how we use them today.

What does the word 'peace' mean? (quietness, not being angry with others, no hurting)

- The early Christians (and the Jews) had a different understanding of 'peace'. It meant being in a good relationship with God and others, and not 'owing' them anything like an apology.
- As a result, you can experience this sort of peace at a noisy birthday party!

What does the word 'sin' mean? (actions which are not loving and hurt someone in some way)

- The first Christians had a different meaning for 'sin'. It means 'not recognising Jesus as God'.
- Things that we call sins sometimes come from not understanding or following Jesus fully.

- For instance, if I forget that Jesus loves the person who annoys me, I might be really mean to them or copy their behaviour to someone else.
- Understanding and remembering what Jesus really taught can stop me from doing things that we call 'sins' in English today.

Why did Jesus breathe on his followers?

- because he wanted to 'inspire' them (which means to have the Holy Spirit in you);
- Why? Because he was wanted to help them to tell people about him;
- And because he was giving them permission to forgive people and make important decisions.

Jesus asked his followers to go out and spread his peace by forgiving sin.

- Would there be more peace in the world if there was more forgiveness? (Yes!)
- If we are people who forgive others, there will be more peace.

Other Gospels we have heard recently tell us that Jesus came to give us a full life.

- When we are filled with the Spirit, we share that peace and fullness of life with others.

## Response

In Greek, the language the Gospels were written in, the word for 'Spirit' and 'breath' is *pneuma* (pronounced 'nooma'). So we're going to play a breathing game.

- Invite the children to take up positions as frozen statues;
- Choose one child to start the game by whispering 'nooma' into just one child's ear;
- Tell the children that when someone whispers 'nooma' in their ear, they are unfrozen;
- Once unfrozen, they can then whisper 'nooma' into one other child's ear to unfreeze them;
- Soon the whole room should be unfrozen (but you can play it again if you have time);
- Tell the children that when they go home, they can tell their families what 'nooma' means and whisper it to them.

## We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting them to reply, 'I do, Alleluia, Alleluia!'

- Do you believe in God the Father who sent his Son to save us?
- Do you believe in Jesus, who sends his friends out to continue his work?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who Jesus sent to help all of Jesus' followers, including us?

## We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'You send out your friends to care for the world, and so we pray...'

*Leader:* we pray for those who tell others about God, that they may be brave. Lord, in your mercy

*All:* **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* We pray for the whole world, that everyone may know your love. Lord, in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* We pray for those who are feeling weighed down by any bad feelings, that they may know your forgiveness and love. Lord, in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* We pray for our families and friends, that they may be kind and free. Lord, in your mercy,

*All:* **Hear our prayer.**

*Leader:* Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we may show your love to the world. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

*All:* **Amen.**