

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Pentecost, Year B
19 May 2024
John 15: 26-27, 16: 12-15

Catechist Background

The first Christian feast of Pentecost took place fifty days after the resurrection. It took place during the celebration of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, a harvest feast held fifty days after Passover. This Jewish feast also celebrated the giving of the Law to Moses, and so Jews came to Jerusalem from all over the known world to celebrate it together. As the Christian feast celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost has also been called the birthday of the Church. While in one sense true, this is a simplistic understanding of the event: the Church exists not for its own sake but to bring the Good News to the world.

The Gospel for today comes again from the Last Supper discourse. (Please note, it is the First Reading today from Acts 2: 1-11 which retells of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles at the first Christian Pentecost). In the Gospel, the word 'Paraclete' (by which mean the Holy Spirit) is a technical ancient Greek legal term meaning a defence witness or intercessor that can be translated several ways in English, depending on the translation (e.g. 'helper,' 'guide,' 'witness,' 'comforter,' etc.). The best translation for this particular reading is probably 'Advocate,' as Jesus speaks of this Advocate being a witness.

The 'Spirit of Truth,' as the Holy Spirit is called in the next part, was sent to the disciples after Jesus went away, to guide them to the Truth of the Father. It is important to note what Jesus does NOT say about the Holy Spirit: the Spirit is not given to make us feel good or to give us supernatural powers. It is not a cosmic Santa Claus, rewarding us with what we want if we are good Christians. No, the Holy Spirit is given to glorify God.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, each child will become a 'candle.' Glue or staple a red/orange/yellow flame shape to a band of sturdy paper or card about 2 inches wide and long enough to fasten around a child's head. Once in place, fix the two ends of the band together around the head of each child, so that it is secure.

We Say Sorry

Leader: Lord Jesus, you free us from fear, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You give us your peace, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You have shown us the Holy Spirit, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

God, just as the Holy Spirit was given to your first disciples, let the Holy Spirit be with us now to touch our thoughts and our hearts and our actions. Amen.

Gospel Intro

Ask the children if they remember what we heard in last week's Gospel. The leader may need to remind them that Jesus prayed for his friends to be faithful to God and united.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 15: 26-27, 16: 12-15

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Jesus calls the Advocate or Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of Truth'. What do you think that means?
- What is the Holy Spirit for? What does the Holy Spirit help us to do?
- At the first Christian Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in a particularly peculiar way. Has anybody heard what that was?

Response

The children may be confused or frightened of the description of the Holy Spirit coming in flames and wind and it is important to address these concerns. Like lighting candles on a cake or at the Easter Vigil, one candle flame can be used to light several candles which can then be used to light more until many candles are lit. Give each child a 'flame' to put on - if we were real candles in a dark room, what would happen to the room? It is the same with the world. If each person allows the Holy Spirit to shine through them, the whole world will soon be ablaze with God's love.

We Believe

Relating to the Creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do,'

- Do you believe in God the Father who sent his Son to save us?
- Do you believe in Jesus, God the Son, who sends his friends to continue his work?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who has been with Jesus' followers since the first Pentecost and is with us today?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayer to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Lord, you sent your Holy Spirit to the first disciples, and so we also pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on our world...'

Leader: We pray for leaders of all Christian churches, that they may work together to glorify God. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the many places in the world where it is difficult for people to find jobs. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for our own parish, that we may be true witnesses to Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is feeling lonely, that they realise that God is always with them and that our friendship is always with them. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to be open to your Holy Spirit in our lives, to light our world with your Truth and Love. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.