

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

COME, HOLY SPIRIT, COME



SUNDAY READINGS:

Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

I Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

PENTECOST CONTINUES TODAY

On this beautiful feast of Pentecost, we affirm that the Holy Spirit is alive in the Church. Diverse Spirit-given gifts flourish in Christian communities across the globe. Today we Catholics are privileged to live in a renewed Church, in a unique age of “a new Pentecost”! Recall that just last year the Church rejoiced as she observed the

60th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council by Saint Pope Paul VI in 1965. Vatican II was only the 21st ecumenical council in the Church’s entire history.

A Spirit-inspired Pope. Pope John XXIII, canonized a saint by Pope Francis on April 27, 2014, composed a prayer that the Council might be “a new Pentecost.” His intentions for Vatican II became clear: spiritual renewal of the Church, pastoral updating (*aggiornamento*), and the promotion of Christian unity. Many people were surprised that this “caretaker” pope (he was already 77 years old) would undertake such an enormous project. John XXIII’s initiative was truly “Spirit-inspired”!

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Vatican II extended through four sessions (1962-1965), bringing together some 2,500 bishops (14 Maryknoll bishops participated). The Council produced 16 documents which capture its message of renewal for both the Church and the world. Pope Francis (2013-2025) continually promoted the Second Vatican Council and its dynamic vision of the Church.

Invoking Heavenly Assistance. On Pentecost 1959 John XXIII established a preparatory commission; then on Pentecost 1960 he announced the structure of the preparatory period. The Council formally opened on October 11, 1962, but exactly one week earlier on the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi (October 4), the pope observed a “day of prayer for the Council.” He also made a pilgrimage to Loreto and Assisi to implore Mary, “the first star of the Council,” and Saint Francis to intercede for this “great ecumenical meeting awaited by all.”

In Assisi John XXIII compared Vatican II with Pentecost; he prayed that the bishops would enter “the Council hall of Saint Peter’s Basilica as the Apostles and the first disciples of Jesus entered into the Cenacle [Upper Room].”

Implementing the Council. When the first session of the Council concluded (December 8, 1962), Pope John spoke of his desire that “the acts of the Ecumenical Council meet with the generous and loyal response of the faithful.” Indeed, the acceptance and continual implementation of Vatican II by everyone—clergy and lay faithful alike—remain urgent tasks today—over 60 years after Saint John XXIII announced his launch of “a new Pentecost.”

According to the Spirit-inspired vision of John XXIII, when ordinary Catholics—you and I—fully accept the renewal of Vatican II, then and only then “will dawn that new Pentecost which is the object of our yearning—a Pentecost that will increase the Church’s wealth of spiritual strength and extend her maternal influence and saving power to every sphere of human endeavor.” The words of the Gospel remain alive and urgent for us: “Receive the Holy Spirit....As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” We continually pray: “Come, Holy Spirit.” “*Veni, Sancte Spiritus.*”

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11: Pentecost originated as a Jewish feast, celebrated 50 days after Passover. It attracted many devout Jewish pilgrims from the whole Diaspora. There were people in Jerusalem from numerous places, all using a variety of languages. Thus, the “miracle of tongues” was heard by various peoples from the entire Mediterranean world.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm: 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34: This psalm reflects the renewing effects of the Spirit of God upon all recipients. When the Spirit arrives, one witnesses the manifold works of the Lord. Indeed, everything is recreated and the entire face of the earth is renewed. We never tire of sincerely praying: “Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.”

Second Reading - I Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13: Paul’s dynamic letter to the Corinthians asserts that the Holy Spirit inspires various gifts, ministries, and works in the Church. The Spirit unifies all these gifts to serve the needs of the Church and the wider community. The Sequence is an ancient beautiful poem which implores the Spirit to enter into our hearts; we fervently pray: Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Gospel - John 17:1-11a: Today’s Gospel recalls a beautiful scene that happened fifty days earlier, when Jesus appeared to his disciples on Easter Sunday. Jesus breathed on them [“Spirit” means “breath”]. When Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit, their fears were changed, becoming peace and courage. The fearful disciples were transformed into dynamic missionaries; they believed that just as the Father sent Jesus, they were also sent on mission.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► *Living in Joyful Hope*, ► *Exploring Vatican II Treasures*, and ► *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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