

# Breaking Open the Word of Faith

Good News Reflections for the Sundays of June, 2017

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## Pentecost Sunday

June 4, 2017

Read:

Acts 2:1-11

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

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

John 20:19-23

**Reflect:**

"Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth." This is our prayer in the responsorial Psalm for Pentecost. It's the reason the Church can exist and continues to exist. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit.

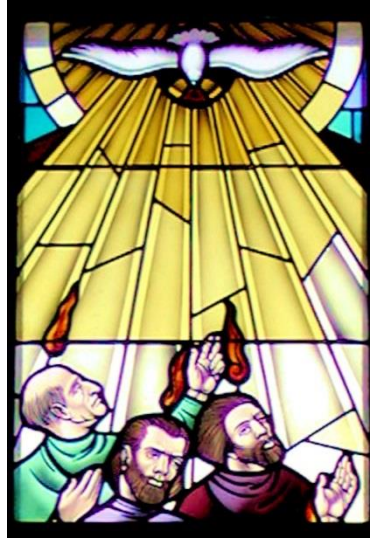
Without the power and presence of the Spirit of Christ, Christianity would have been unable to change the world and sustain itself during two millennia of persecutions, scandals, and obstacles.

Without the Spirit of Christ, we Christians would be unable to be Christ in today's world. We'd be unable to do what the Father asks of us.

Pentecost Sunday re-lives the birthday of the Church, and as it does, it also re-lives our spiritual birthdays, i.e., our initiations as members of the Church. It's a community-wide celebration of the impact that our baptisms have had on our lives and it's a reaffirmation of the Sacrament of Confirmation when the bishop confirmed that we truly received the Holy Spirit during baptism.

Pentecost reminds us that through these sacraments we received God's power and presence so that we can overcome sin, live in holiness, and change the world around us.

How does God "renew the face of the earth"? Through us! First, God the Father gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus the Son so that he could successfully fulfill his mission on earth. Jesus then gave his Holy Spirit to us, so that we can grow in holiness and to continue the work of renewal that he began.



If you feel inadequate for any holy task, you're correct: You are inadequate. But the Spirit of God who dwells in you is more than adequate. Proceed forward trusting in this partnership!

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Are you making a difference on the earth because of the Holy Spirit living in you and working through you?

† What is the Holy Spirit doing – or wanting to do – through you?

Answer this first regarding your home life, then your job, then your parish, then your recreational activities, in that order of priority.

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† How did you first discover that the Holy Spirit was making a difference in the lives of others through you?

† Describe a recent time when God partnered with you.

† How do you feel about the Spirit of God renewing the world through you? What are your hopes and dreams for this?

### Comments/Prayer Requests:

## Holy Trinity Sunday

June 11, 2017

Read:

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9

Daniel 3:52-56

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

John 3:16-18

### Reflect:

On the first Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate and honor God's character as the Most Holy Trinity.

The first reading shows us the Father as he parented the baby nation of Israel. We see that he is "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and faithfulness" – the Perfect Father.

If we have difficulty seeing him this way, it's because we've never experienced a human father-figure who showed us what perfect fatherhood looks like. Our spirits need healing. We've been projecting human imperfections onto our image of God. Even the best parents and teachers fall short of the wonderfulness of God's fatherhood. We need to consciously differentiate him from our human dads and other human authorities.

The second reading shows us the entire Trinity: the grace of Jesus, the love of the Father, and our friendly partnership with the Holy Spirit. In this and because of this, we are to rejoice, mend our ways, and live in peace with one another.

In other words, because Jesus bore our sins as he died on the cross and then conquered death, he provides us with grace so that we can resist sin, and he provides us with the Father's love so that we can love one another no matter what, and he provides us with the Holy Spirit, who fellowships with us and empowers us so that we can continually live as holy Christians.

The Gospel reading shows us the depth of the Father's love. He doesn't condemn us for our sins; he gives us his Son to rescue us from the destructive results of our sins. Our sins condemn us and sen-



tence us to eternal death, but Jesus saves us from this by taking us to eternal life – *if* we want him to!

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† Which Person of the Trinity do you know the least? Or feel distant from? Or fear?

† How have human relationships interfered with your ability to feel God's closeness?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† Which Person of the Trinity do you know best? Why?

† How is the Trinity the perfect example of a good, loving, healthy relationship?

### Comments/Prayer Requests:



## Corpus Christi Sunday

June 18, 2017

Read:

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a

Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

### Reflect:

This Sunday we celebrate the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the reason why we believe it is truly and physically the presence of Jesus.



In the first reading, we're reminded that God our Father always provides the food and drink that we need for survival in the desert days of life's hardships. What he did for the Israelites, he does for us today in whatever ways we experience hot trials and dry faith. He provides what we need by giving us the True Presence of Christ, who comes to us in the bread of Mass (the Eucharist), and in the presence of his Holy Spirit dwelling within us (Baptism and Confirmation), and in the priest whose ordination makes Jesus present to us in Confession.

The Gospel passage tells us that the Eucharistic food and drink are truly Jesus himself, not a mere symbol of his love. Oh-my oh-my, how we need this food and drink to survive the serpents and scorpions and the parched and waterless ground of our desert experiences! Jesus literally fills us and quenches our thirsts. As we consume him, he consumes us. As we draw him into us, he draws us into himself. In this unity, we walk through our trials with all that we need for success.

The second reading tells us that the Eucharist increases our unity with Christ's body on earth, the church community through which he provides the various resources that we need. In this unity – when it's activated as it should be – no one lacks anything good because all necessary goods are shared. And ultimately in this unity, as Jesus said in the Gospel, we're assured of eternal life in heaven, where all needs are met perfectly and completely.

### Questions for Personal Reflection:

† What are the "serpents and scorpions" in your life right now?

† In what ways do you feel parched, thirsty to the point of desperation?

† During Mass, imagine that you're walking through a desert to receive from Jesus what

you need. How does it feel to approach Jesus this way?

### Questions for Faith Sharing:

† How has the Eucharist helped you through a difficult time? Why did it make a difference?

† Some people kiss the Host before placing it in their mouths; what do you do that helps you become more aware of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist for all your needs?

### Comments/Prayer Requests:

## 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 25, 2017

Read:

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Ps 69:(14c)8-10,14,17,33-35

Romans 5:12-15

Matthew 10:26-33

**Reflect:**

Think of a time when you were in darkness: a sin, for example, or when you felt abandoned by God or your prayers seemed dry and your spiritual gifts seemed covered over. What did Jesus say to you at that time (perhaps through scripture or friends or a homily at Mass)? What did his whisperings tell you? His words and his guidance were good news for you!

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus says: "What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light."

He's calling you and commissioning you and empowering you, through his Holy Spirit, to share your good news with others, so that they can hear him in *their* darkness. Proclaim it boldly and visibly so that those who want to hear it will stop and listen. Do not be afraid to openly share how Jesus has been working in your life and how he's helped you grow or heal or turn away from sin.

Yes, when we're this bold, some people ridicule us and reject us, like how Jeremiah was treated in the first reading. But the Lord is with you, too, as "a mighty champion," and your persecutors will eventually stumble and fail. Jesus tells us to "fear no one." God takes good care of us.

Jesus acknowledges those who acknowledge him. In other words, when we're insulted or persecuted for our faith, God holds us and comforts us. It's *his* opinion of us that matters anyway, and no one else's. Listen to him. In the whispers of the sanctuary of your heart, he's telling you all the good that he sees in you. He's telling you that he appreciates the good you have done. He's giving you good news worth sharing.



**Questions for Personal Reflection:**

† What is your testimony? What did Jesus teach you when you were in sin or handling a recent difficulty? Write it down; this exercise will help you feel more confident when you try to share your story with others.

**Questions for Faith Sharing:**

† Practice sharing the testimony you realized during the above personal reflection: Proclaim it first to your community who understands.

† And as you listen to the testimonies of others, encourage them: Tell them how their story helps you.

† Then, make a commitment to go forth and spread the good news. What does this commitment look like? What will you do first to fulfill your commitment?

**Comments/Prayer Requests:**