

THE EMMAUS SERIES

Pentecost Sunday, Year C

Acts 2:1-11

Romans 8:8-17

John 14:15-16, 23-26

The Holy Spirit will remind you of all I have said to you

The reading from Acts sets the tone for today's celebration. Luke tells how the Church's universal mission was inaugurated, in the power of the Holy Spirit, as faithful Jews gathered for their Pentecost festival, fifty days after the Passover celebration. Luke was conscious of his task of telling the world what had really happened – as he makes clear in introducing each of his two works. He faced a great challenge, however, as he set out to describe and interpret the vast complexity of the Church's early development. He met this difficulty by choosing several events that were turning points in the Church's history, and presenting them in a dramatic way that made clear their profound significance – a device used by other writers of the day.

Luke's story of the Church's first Pentecost is an example of this approach. The Church's first courageous witness, and its subsequent announcing of the Good News throughout the known world, was a remarkable fulfilment of the Saviour's promise that he would give his disciples courage and power through the gift of his own Spirit (Mk 13:9-11). The universality of the Church's mission is made clear. The Church's first witness is to 'devout people from every nation' - in the first place to 'Jews', but with the mention of 'proselytes' among the crowd addressed the conversion of the gentiles is also anticipated. In the continuation of our passage, Peter's sermon gives a summary of the Church's early witness.

It is in the power of the Spirit that the Church takes up its mission. Today, before all days, the Church invites us to deepen our faith in the Saviour's gift of his own Spirit. Already in the Old Testament, 'the Spirit of God' was active as a life-giving force at work in creation. Anointed by the Spirit as God's 'Servant', in fulfilment of the prophecies of the Book of Isaiah, Jesus has led us to know the Spirit as a Person sharing the one divine life with the Father and the Son. Today's gospel reading is a meditation upon this shared life, and the way in which those who find faith in Christ have the Father and the Son 'make their home' in them. Those who have received the gift of Christ's own Spirit will be led to know how the Saviour is the source of hope for the whole world - as the Spirit 'reminds' them of all that Jesus said and did..

The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; the Spirit is the very life principle of the Church; the Spirit dwells in each believer as our 'paraclete' – the companion who stands by us in all our trials, providing whatever is needed to survive every trial. We live 'in Christ' because he has given us his own Spirit. Writing to the Romans St Paul reminds these new converts that, together with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit will come to 'live in them' – renewing their lives, as they set aside their old fears, and find joy and encouragement, as the Father's beloved 'children' who are 'coheirs with Christ', sharing the blessings of his resurrection.

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