

Prayerful preparation for Pentecost

Set aside a prayer time and begin by relaxing and coming to stillness.

Read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, paying attention to any words that stand out for you. Stay with those words for a few minutes and wait to see if God is present to you.

Acts 2:1-11. *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak.*

When Pentecost day came round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language.

They were amazed and astonished.

‘Surely’ they said ‘all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.’

Reflection

Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, was a feast of thanksgiving to God for the first wheat harvest of the year and for the giving of the Law to Moses: a time of rejoicing in harvest and in their covenant with God as chosen people. An appropriate time for the Holy Spirit to fill their hearts with a desire to spread the teachings of Jesus and to complete the work of Moses and Jesus?

The Apostles are locked into a room in this retelling, waiting. Think of what has happened to them since the Last Supper, betrayal by Judas, fearful distancing by most of them as Jesus' faces His Passion and Death, the Resurrection, the appearances of the risen Jesus and the Ascension. Imagine how it was likely to be for them. Afraid of the Jews, the future they had envisaged in ruins and did they know what they were waiting for? Any resonance to our lives today? Into their confusion, (mess?) the Holy Spirit made his powerful presence felt with wind and fire.

How did they receive this gift? They began to speak as the Spirit filled them. They were filled with courage and ended their isolation. They go out to the marketplace and tell the crowd of God's powerful works. Peter becomes eloquent and fearless. He proclaims Jesus as Messiah and tells the crowd to repent, to change their behaviour and their way of thinking. He is inspired and embolden by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jesus had told them 'to settle down in the city until you are clothed with power from on high'. Do you believe your Baptism and Confirmation have clothed you with power from on high? Do you believe the Spirit dwells within you and within the whole of creation working to bring about the Kingdom of God? Am I aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in me? What gifts have I received from the Spirit? Does anything in me prevent the Holy Spirit from bearing fruit in my life?

Prayer prompts

Lectio Divina, Benedictine origin

Lectio read the text as being inspired by the Holy Spirit. What is standing out for you?

Meditatio, how does the text apply to your own situation and needs now? How can you adapt it to your daily living?

Oratio, pray, responding to God's Word, listening to God and then responding to God.

Contemplatio, we hope to feel united in love with God when words become unnecessary.

Franciscan Prayer suggestion

Praise and thank God for all the good qualities that you find in yourself. How can you more fully develop these good qualities?

Ignatian and Augustinian approach

Using your creative imagination, place yourself in the Biblical scene and become part of it. Imagine what you might see, hear, what the others in the scene are doing. Try to draw some relevance for you and your life today from your experience.

Thomistic Prayer, popularised by St Thomas Aquinas

Using Lectio Divina, consider Peter. What was his mission? When / How / why / how / to whom, where, what helped him in his mission? Apply these questions to yourself. How are you going to live out your mission?

Adapted from 'Prayer and Temperament' by C. P. Michael & M. C. Norrissey (1984).