

Pentecost (Whitsunday) 2025
Sermon - Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Acts 2.1-22 St. John 14.15-31



A promise made! A promise kept!

In his sermon for the Ascension Day...Father Herb noted from our study of the Old and New Testaments...our God is a God of promises spoken for the sake of human history. God speaks...and then he takes action. He has been directly involved in human history from the beginning.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. This is one of the three great festivals of the Church Year...the other two being Christmas and Easter. Pentecost is also traditionally observed as the Church's birthday...from the mass conversion and baptisms of over 3000 people who responded to Peter and the other Apostles' powerful testimonies on the great works God had done for his people. And since this is the Church's birthday...let's not forget to wish each other a "Happy Birthday!"

The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek word *pentekoste* (pen-tay-KOS-tay) meaning "fiftieth day". The festival has its origins in the Jewish "Feast of Weeks" celebrated 50 days after Passover. According to the Book of Deuteronomy...the first-fruits of the corn harvest were to be presented on this day. In Jesus and the Apostles' time, Pentecost had become a commemoration of the giving of the Law (The Ten Commandments) by Moses. The Church continues to celebrate Pentecost 50 days after Easter.

Easter and Pentecost were the two days Catechumens...those who had been undergoing a long period of training and instruction...received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism...becoming members of the Church...the Body of Christ. The Book of Common Prayer calls this day Whitsunday and subtitles it Pentecost. The "whit" part of Whitsunday refers to the white robes worn by the newly baptized as they began their new life in Christ. The practice of wearing white robes at baptism is still observed in churches today...especially in clothes worn by infants and children.

Before he went back to heaven, Jesus promised his disciples he would send the Holy Spirit to enlighten and empower them. The Holy Spirit would make all things clear to them. Acts tells us when the Day of Pentecost came...all of the believers were gathered together in one place. The Holy Spirit...like a strong wind...filled the room...and tongues of fire touched each of them. From that point on...their lives were changed forever. At our baptisms...the Holy Spirit touches our lives and changes them forever.

Perhaps the most remarkable change was in Peter. He and the other believers were able to speak about the great things God had done for his people in languages they did not know. Just imagine what it would be like to instantaneously be able to speak many languages at the same time...and to be clearly understood. Some people were “amazed and confused” at what they heard and asked, “What does this mean?” Others made fun of the Apostles and accused them of being drunk.

Peter...empowered by the Holy Spirit...stood up and spoke loudly so everyone could hear him. He said to the crowd...*amethystos*...Greek for “not drunk”...in fact “stone cold sober”. Peter and the Apostles were not under any mind-altering substance. They were under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Peter then quoted what the prophet Joel had written 500 years earlier...

“...God says, I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams...and then whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved”...

...Peter told the crowd Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled right in front of their eyes.

Filled with God’s Holy Spirit...the crowd took the Good News about Jesus out into the World. They became first missionaries for Christ. We can only do the work God wants us to do because we have the gift of the Holy Spirit Jesus promised he would send us...to strengthen us and guide us into doing what we are paying for in the Collect...to “have right judgment in all things”...and then to take action.

A promise made! A promise kept! Happy Pentecost! Happy Birthday!

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