

The Catholic Company presents



Happy Birthday, Church!

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. Why do some call it “the birthday of the Church”?

Pentecost is far more than the end of the Easter Season and the renewal of Ordinary Time. It’s the day when the Holy Spirit filled the Apostles’ souls, empowering them to go out into the world and make disciples of all nations even in the face of persecution and death.

The word “pentecost” is derived from the Greek word for “fiftieth.” In ancient Jewish tradition, Pentecost was a feast day known as the Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated the fiftieth day after Passover. According to Scripture, the first fruits of the grain harvest were offered to God during this feast (Leviticus 23:15-21 and Deuteronomy 16:9-11).

In the New Testament, Jesus’ Apostles stayed in the Upper Room on the Feast of Weeks. There, they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and made ready to preach the Gospel.

As soon as St. Peter received the Holy Spirit, he preached his first homily to non-Christians. He told the crowd that the prophet Joel had predicted the future coming of the Holy Spirit. He then attests that the very Jesus whom they had crucified has risen from the dead. Immediately, those in the crowd were “cut to the heart” and sought repentance (Acts 2:37).

Peter told these new converts that in order to be saved, they had to repent and be baptized. According to the book of Acts, about three thousand people converted to Christianity that day (Acts 3:41).

Because the Church gained its first converts on this day, a pious custom arose to call Pentecost “the birthday of the Church,” even though the name is not official Church teaching. After all, far from being born as an infantile entity, the Church—which was “born” from the pierced side of Christ on the cross—comes forth from

Pentecost fully formed and ready to take Jesus' message of redemption to the ends of the earth.

From this point forward, the Apostles and their successors went out into the world and made new disciples, as Jesus had commanded them. Thanks to their courage and the grace of God, the Church is the majestic entity it is today.

On this Feast of Pentecost, we should ask ourselves, *"How can I, like the Apostles, step out of my comfort zone to share the Good News?"*

Remind yourself of the power of the Holy Spirit with these Holy Spirit items.