

# *ctkAlive!* Scripture Study

## Feast of Pentecost 2020—A Cycle Readings

“Come, O Holy Spirit, come!”



“Pentecost”  
by [Louis Galloche](#)  
(1670 - 1761)

Note: For your convenience and to broaden your benefit from this and all sessions in this series, we have added links to books, authors, and other references mentioned in the text.

**Caution:** Links to the internet are like rabbits dashing across a hunter’s path. Instinct says, “Leave the reflection and chase after that link!” Instead, we suggest waiting until you have followed the entire reflection. Then take all the time you wish to follow these interesting and educational links.

### **Opening Prayer**

#### Veni Sancte Spiritus

The hymn, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, is read or sung at Pentecost. This beautiful tribute to the Holy Spirit is said to have been written by [Stephen Langton](#), the Archbishop of Canterbury around the year 1200. It became part of the Roman Missal used for Mass in the 16th century. It is also known as the “golden sequence” (sequence being a term for a hymn spoken or sung before the Gospel at certain Masses).

*(abridged)*

Come, O Holy Spirit, come!  
From your bright and blissful Home  
Rays of healing light impart.

Come, Father of the poor,  
Source of gifts that will endure  
Light of ev'ry human heart.

You, of all consolers best,  
Of the soul, most kindly Guest,  
Quick'ning courage do bestow.

In hard labor, You are rest,  
In the heat, You refresh best,  
And in our woe, solace give.

Cleanse our souls from sinful stain,  
Bathe our dryness with Your rain  
Heal our wounds and mend our way

On the faithful who, in You,  
Trust with childlike piety,  
Deign your sevenfold gift to send.

Give virtue's rich increase,  
Saving grace to die in peace,  
Give us joys that never end.

Amen. Alleluia.

## **Liturgy of Pentecost Themes**

Origin of "Pentecost" (Source--[Wikipedia](#))

In Judaism, the Festival of Weeks (*Shavuot*) is a harvest festival celebrated seven weeks and one day after the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deuteronomy 16: 9). The date originally came the day after seven full weeks following the first harvest of grain. In Jewish tradition the fiftieth day was known as the Festival of Weeks. The actual mention of fifty days comes from Leviticus 23: 16, or seven weeks and one day after the Sabbath. The Festival of Weeks is also called the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23: 16) and the day of first fruits (Numbers 28: 26). In Exodus 34: 22, it is called "Feast of Weeks"—the "first fruits of the wheat harvest."

## **Introduction to the Liturgical Readings for Pentecost**

Acts 2: 1-11—"Suddenly, out of the sky came a *sound*, like a strong rushing wind . . . there appeared tongues of fire. . . ." This reminds us of a song from the stage musical, *Westside Story*: "The most beautiful sound I ever heard . . ." That must have been what the disciples felt on that glorious morning. They flung open their locked doors and headed for the streets, where chaos and a holy wonder reigned. People in the streets wondered, "What could this be?"

Psalm 104—"Praise Yahweh, my soul! Clothed in majesty and splendor; O Yahweh, my God, how great you are!"

What a beautiful public testimonial of Jewish faith—and ours. This is prayer at its best, coming as it does from deep in the soul of both the entire community and that of each individual believer. It also says something about human nature: how easily we descend from our mountaintop experiences back into our daily trials and labor, as we live our faith in the rush and distractions of daily living.

I Corinthians 12: 3-7, 12-13—"All of us, whether Jew or Greek, slaves or free, have been baptized in one spirit, to form one body, and all of us have been given to drink from the one Spirit."

Paul reminds us that it's not for us to decide who is worthy of Divine Love. There isn't now and never has been a caste system when it comes to the divine call to live in the Spirit. As we sing in one of our favorite Mass hymns, "*All* are welcome in this place" (That means everyone!) Any ranks or classes within the Body of Christ, whether individual and institutional, are not the work of the Holy Spirit, the God of Pentecost.

John 20: 19-23—"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." What an *all*-forgiving greeting! The Risen Christ bestows his "peace" on his fragile community, many of whom are reeling from their personal and collective guilt over having abandoned their Lord and Master in his hour greatest need. Our God is definitely a God of limitless patience with our fickleness.

### **First Reading: Acts of the Apostles (2: 1-11)**

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. And suddenly, out of the sky, came a sound, like a strong rushing wind; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared tongues, as if of fire, which parted and came to rest upon each one of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

"Staying in Jerusalem were religious Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered, all excited, because each heard them speaking in *his own* language. Full of amazement and wonder, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear them in our own native language? Here are Parthians, Medes and Elamites; and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia; Pontus and Asia; Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt; and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; and visitors from Rome; both Jews and foreigners who accept Jewish beliefs, Cretians and Arabians; and all of us hear them proclaiming in our own language what God, the Savior, does.'"

### **Personal Reflection**

“All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

For the past 2,000 years, scholars have tried to understand the meaning of “speak other languages.” Opinions range from A to Z, with no definitive resolution.

— *In my opinion, what was the communications channel between the Aramaic/Greek-speaking apostles and disciples and the foreign visitors to Jerusalem on that most unusual day?*

If I have had a “Pentecost” experience in my own life (e.g., courage replacing fear, light overcoming darkness), relive that original experience now, in detail.

— *How would I describe it from my vantage point today? How have memory and life ripened (matured) that original event?*

— *Where in my world today do I see the Holy Spirit present and moving within me? Within my parish community? Within the broader society?*

### **Antiphonal Psalm (104: 1, 24, 29-34)**

*God’s boundless care for his creation: a psalm of worship.*

*Lord, send us your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

Praise Yahweh, my soul!  
How varied O Yahweh, are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all—  
the earth, full of your creatures.

*Lord, send us your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

When you hide your face they vanish;  
you take away their breath;  
they expire and return to dust.  
When you send forth your spirit,  
they are created, and the face of the earth is renewed.

*Lord, send us your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

May the glory of Yahweh endure forever;  
may Yahweh rejoice in his works!  
He looks on the earth, and it quakes;  
he touches the mountain, and it smokes.

I will sing to Yahweh all my life;  
I will sing praise to God while I live.

*Lord, send us your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

May my song give him pleasure,  
as Yahweh gives me delight.  
May sinners vanish from the earth,  
and may the wicked be no more.  
Praise Yahweh, my soul!

*Lord, send us your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

### Personal Reflection

“When you hide your face (your works) vanish; you take away their breath; they expire and return to dust. When you send forth your spirit, (good works) are created, and the face of the earth is renewed.”

— *The poetic psalmist seems to put God in position of being fickle: “When you hide . . . when you send forth. . .” How prone am I to thinking it is Yahweh-God who comes and goes in my life? If I were to rewrite these lines from my personal faith-life experience, what would I say? How do I account for the times of God’s nearness-distance in my daily life?*

“May my song give him pleasure, as Yahweh gives me delight.”

— *What is my daily “God-song” in gratitude for delighting my days with life, family, friends, work, and all that I enjoy each day?*

— *If my daily life sometimes brings pain, sorrow, regret, dissatisfaction, how do they fit into my personal life-song?*

### **Second Reading: From the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (12: 3-7, 12-13)**

“Whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows. But I know that this man, whether in the body or out of the body—I do not know, God knows—was taken up to Paradise, where he heard words that cannot be told: things which humans cannot express.

“Of that man I can indeed boast, but of myself I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. If I wanted to boast, it would not be foolish of me, for I would speak the truth. However, I better give up, lest somebody think more of me than what is seen in me or heard from me. Lest I become proud, after so many and extraordinary

revelations; I was given a thorn in my flesh, a true messenger of Satan, to slap me in the face.

“I have acted as a fool, but you forced me. You should have been the ones commending me. Yet, I do not feel outdone by those *super*-apostles, even though I am nothing. All the signs of a true apostle are found in me: patience in all trials, signs, miracles, and wonders. Now, in what way were you not treated like the rest of the churches? Only in this: I was not a burden to you—forgive me for this offense!”

### Personal Reflection

Paul gives his beloved friends and spiritual children in the Church at Corinth (Greece) a peek inside his beautiful soul. He shares the mystery of his own intimate relationship with God and his own paternal love for their growing community. Twice he admits his wonder at the mystery of faith: “Whether in the body or out of the body, *I do not know, God knows*. But I know that this man, whether in the body or out of the body—I do not know, God knows—was taken up to Paradise, where he heard words that cannot be told: things which humans cannot express.”

— *How might I describe, like Paul, the mystery of God’s mysterious workings in my own life? (Pick out 3 or 4 ways I see God at work in my life—unless you are moved to go deeper/further.)*

“I do not feel outdone by those *super*-apostles, even though I am nothing.” One of the banes of Paul’s missionary life was this. After he left Corinth (and other new communities), Christian preachers—self-acclaimed *super-apostles*—would come in after him and spread the message that Paul had not taught them properly. That triggered several of his pastoral letters (two to the community at Corinth) in which he had to teach, reassure, correct and, sometimes, scold the communities.

— *Is Paul just nursing a grudge, a bit of jealousy, wounded pride? Or, is it something else? Try to express the great Apostle’s scolding in your own words . . . .*

— *To whom do I go when seeking the best wisdom of our faith (what clergy, lay persons, or spiritual authors)? Who else?*

### **Proclamation from the Gospel of John (20: 19-23)**

On the evening of that day, the first day after the Sabbath [*Easter Night*], the doors were locked where the disciples were, because of their fear of the Jews.

But Jesus came, and stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” Then he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples, seeing the Lord, were full of joy.

Again Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” After saying this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy

Spirit! Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; those whose sins you retain, they are retained.”

[In this Ascension passage, we hear an echo from Psalm 104: “When you hide your face they vanish; you take away their breath; they expire and return to dust.]

### Personal Reflection

“ . . . the doors were locked where the disciples were, because of their fear of the Jews. But Jesus came, and stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you!’”  
Message: We can lock our minds and hearts against the truth, but no lock or prison bars ever built can keep the Risen Christ out of the most private chambers of our soul.

— *When was the last time I became aware of “locking” God out of my life—even for a short time? What were the circumstances? What did I learn from this?*

“After saying this, (the Risen Christ) breathed on them . . . .”

The Hebrew word for “breath is *ruah*. There is deep scriptural significance to this life-giving action. It first appears in Scripture in the Book of Genesis (2: 7): “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*, and the man became a living being.”

At first glance, all this “breath” terminology seems strange to us.

— *How do I interpret this biblical concept of “breathing life into”? How does it fit it into my real-world spiritual life? Has God ever breathed life into me? (Write about your experience during your journaling time below.)*

### Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights gained from reflecting on the Ascension Sunday readings. Suggested prompts:

— *What is the first thought that comes to mind after reflecting this week’s Scriptures?*

We can’t just be “takers” of God’s good gifts. We need to be “givers,” too.

— *What difference will these insights make in how I think and live—and give back—during the week ahead?*

## **Questions**

Feel free to send any questions or comments you might have to [ctkAlive@ctkph.org](mailto:ctkAlive@ctkph.org)

## **Preview of Next Session**

### Feast of the Holy Trinity

Exodus 34: 4-6, 6-9 “Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first and, with the two tablets of stone in his hands, Moses went up Mount Sinai in the early morning, as Yahweh has commanded.

Antiphon: Daniel 3: 52-56 “Blessed are you, Lord, God of our fathers, be praised and exalted forever. Blessed is your holy and glorious name, celebrated and exalted forever.”

II Corinthians 13: 11-13 “Since we have such a great ambition, we are quite confident—unlike Moses, who covered his face with a veil. Otherwise, the Israelites would have seen his passing radiance fade.”

John 3:16-18 “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.”

## **For Your Inspirational Viewing/Listening/Reading**

[Holy Spirit, Rain Down](#) (YouTube link)

Sung by [Hillsong Worship](#)

[“From Spirit to God,”](#) C.S. Lewis’s conversion to Christ  
(10-minute video)

[The Great Divorce](#) by C.S. Lewis (recommended by Bishop Robert Barron)  
(An extraordinary meditation upon good and evil, grace and judgment.)

## **Closing Prayer**

by [JR Woodward](#), author of [Creating a Missionary Culture](#)

<https://jrwoodward.net/2010/05/pentecost-prayer/>

Come, Holy Spirit . . .

Holy Spirit  
our light, our life, our love, our strength,  
be with us now, and always:  
in all our doubts, perplexities, and trials,

Come, Holy Spirit . . .  
In our hours of loneliness, weariness, and grief,

Come, Holy Spirit . . .  
In failure and in loss, in disappointment,

Come, Holy Spirit . . .  
When others fail me, when I fail myself,

Come, Holy Spirit . . .  
When we are ill, unable to work, depressed,

Come, Holy Spirit . . .  
Now, and forever, and in all things,

Come, Holy Spirit.

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