



SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER  
ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION PARISH  
CAMBRIDGE, (H) ONT.

**PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**May 15, 2016**

**Introduction to the Word:**



For Christians, Pentecost commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles while locked in the Upper Room, *“the day of Pentecost ... filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:1-4). The significance of this event is highlighted when this day is sometimes called by Christians *“the birthday of the Church”*. Pentecost comes fifty days after Easter, bringing the Season of Easter to its conclusion.

In the Christian tradition, Pentecost is a liturgical celebration of great joy and festivity (in the Eastern Church this day is the second most important feast day of the year, Easter being the most important). The focus of the celebration is upon the Holy Spirit, one of the greatest gifts given to the Church by God, what some call the *“gift of God's own love”*. While Pentecost commemorates a specific event in the life of the Apostles, it also commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of all the baptized, which endows the newly baptized with spiritual gifts that are both necessary and good for the Church.

**Warm-Up:**

The Feast of Pentecost helps remind us of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The ritual for the Sacrament of Confirmation speaks of receiving the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-3). These seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, right judgement (or counsel), courage (or fortitude), knowledge, reverence (or piety) and wonder and awe (or fear of the Lord). Spend time discussing what each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit means.

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**

**Leader:** God breathed new life into us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, making the love of God more manifest in the world.

**Lord Jesus**, through wind and fire the Holy Spirit was outpoured, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ Jesus**, the Spirit commissions us for your service, **Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus**, you offer us forgiveness of sins and peace in our lives, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Let us pray together our Heart to Home Prayer:**

*God Our Heavenly Father, we long to make our thoughts your thoughts,*



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*and our ways your ways. As we prepare with attentive mind and open heart  
to hear your Word Lord, we long to be empowered with your Spirit  
so that we may bring your Word to our families, our parish and our communities.  
This, our prayer, we make through the intercession of Our Lady of the Visitation and in name of  
Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME** (45 minutes)

(Please select one person –not including the leader – to take a turn at reading the scripture passages below.)

#### **FIRST READING** (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because all heard them speaking in their own languages. Amazed and astonished, they asked “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Egypt and parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **SECOND READING** (1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13)

Brothers and sisters: No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

For just as the body is one and has many members, all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **GOSPEL** (John 20:19-23)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**



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It was evening on the day Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*(Allow a few minutes for quiet and for a brief reflection on a meaningful word or thought)*

### COMMENTARY:

[Feel free as a group to listen once again to the Lord's Day Message](#)

The Book of Acts today describes the day of Pentecost. Pentecost occurs fifty days after Passover, seven weeks, thus the reason it is sometimes called the Feast of Weeks. For the Jewish people, Pentecost is a feast commemorating the giving of the covenant to Israel on Mount Sinai, when Israel is clearly identified as God's own people. This great Jewish feast draws devout Jews on pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem, which explains why there are so many people in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the disciples included. The disciples have remained in Jerusalem, in obedience to Jesus, to await the coming of the Holy Spirit when the promise of Jesus will be fulfilled, a renewed covenant with God.

In today's Gospel text it is in a locked room, and the Risen Lord appears (20:19). After extending peace to the disciples Jesus gives them a mission, He sends them out with the authority to forgive or retain sins – all with the assistance of the Holy Spirit which he breathes upon them (20:22-23). The mission of the disciples, following the resurrection, now begins!

Fifty days since Easter.....for the Apostles and Disciples ....the Easter Season was a time of shocking disarray....the hopelessness of Good Friday had become Ground-breaking in its change - because now suddenly what was loneliness of the ambers of became the warmth of the accompaniment of the Risen Lord.... the earthshattering news from women at the tomb to the Apostles in the Upper Room - that He is Risen...Risen Indeed ...changed it all, but even more so the events that followed provided a light

- the encounter with Thomas - the invitation to put your fingers here touch, believe
- the walk along the Road to Emmaus.....where the scriptures were foretold,
- the breakfast of fish along the sea of Galilee,
- the one on one with Peter to discern his love and redeem his denial



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...it had all become ground-breaking - life altering moments for all of them.

Changed by the event, they so wanted to rebuild...to go out...to proclaim, heal, tell all that Christ was and is for them...they wanted to rebuild the ministry of Jesus after the devastation of Good Friday...their world had been scorched by the Crucifixion. First they needed to be renewed....then they could rebuild...thus came Pentecost..... They comprehended in some way that the flames of the Holy Spirit are not like the Flames of Society. God's flames do not destroy - they heal...they renew...they rebuild, they remake. Renewal is worth it....because it refocuses us ...because it reenergizes.

Sometimes His flames come after the fire of the world which has hurt us, devastated us and even made us doubt what our future may be, maybe we have like our Psalm prayed - Lord Send Forth Your Spirit and Renewal the Face of the Earth. This renewal is not like a face cream we apply, or Botox injection we implant. This renewal is that God's puts His flame with in and provides us with a light that says this is my desire for you...this is my plan for you. This is who my will shall be done in you!

How is God showing you a path, a direction...a Pentecost? Are we open or is there still a door He must fling open?

*(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or idea.)*

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:** (15-20 minutes)

- ▶ On that Pentecost, the Spirit gave the apostles the “fire”, the passion, to go about and accomplish their mission of spreading the Gospel to the whole world. We all have received that same Spirit. How do we preach the Gospel in our homes, our schools, in our parish, in our relationships, our workplaces?
- As Pentecost is a feast that celebrates the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, perhaps it would be worthwhile this week to spend some time reflecting upon the Holy Spirit. However, not reflecting so much upon “who” the Holy Spirit is, but rather upon the charism of the Holy Spirit, “what” the Holy Spirit offers to the people of faith.
- The Apostles needed to leave the safety of their locked room in order to respond to the call of Jesus to continue His ministry. What “**locked room(s)**” must you step out of in order to respond more fully to the call of Jesus?
- Where in your life do you need the “finish” of God in your life? Where could the Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit help you to more fully adopt His Purpose into your life?



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Intercessions:

**Leader:** As we celebrate today the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the beginnings of our Church, let us place our needs, and the needs of all people, into the hands of our loving God. (Response: **Come, Holy Spirit, Come**)

For our Church, which on the day of Pentecost was bathed in God's love through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: may the Spirit continue to ignite the fire of God's love within it, we pray ...

That the gentle touch of the Risen Lord's peace may touch all parts of our world, bringing an end to war, violence and injustice in all its forms, especially in our parish missions in Haiti and Kenya...we pray to the Lord ...

That the light of Christ may bring us peace, and help us to be light for others, especially in our outreach efforts as we approach our annual Service Saturday, we pray to the Lord ...

For all people of faith: may they selflessly use the gifts that God has so generously poured upon them for the common good of our community of faith especially as we seek to begin the next phase of Generations, we pray ...

That we may seek "what is right" in all that we say and do, and that law makers may protect and defend the sanctity of life from conception until natural death, we pray to the Lord ...

For the people and nations suffering from natural disasters throughout the world remembering especially those in Fort McMurray: that the world will respond generously to the sufferings of their families and the loss of their homes: May they be lifted up by caring people and God's own Spirit, we pray to the Lord ...

May the Resurrection we celebrate and proclaim be given to all those who have died and gone before us in faith, we pray to the Lord ...

**Leader:** Let us seek the intercession of the Patroness of our Parish as we pray: [Hail Mary](#)

**Closing Activity and Prayer** (15-20 minutes)

*(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. You may wish to create and add petitions of prayer at this time. This time also intent to provide moments to connect and "outreach" to the larger community.)*

**GROUP PRAYER/ ACTION:**



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St Patrick Parish in downtown Hamilton offers a food kitchen and outreach for 150 a day, seven days a week. They have reached out to us asking us to consider donating items as an Act of Mercy in this Year of Mercy. Please collect and donate cans of coffee, sugar, bottled water, pop or chocolate bars... It might sound a bit “unhealthy” menu, but precisely that’s what is needed as many of them deal with many different forms of addiction and mental health issues. These can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them “Hamilton.”

Consider action this week to make your voice heard on the Physician Assisted Suicide Debate. Statements and resources on Euthanasia from our Canadian Bishops <http://bit.ly/1NiDYoj>.

During this week, where could the “finish: of God’s Spirit be active in your daily life: How is God calling you to new life? How is God showing you that He is with you, providing for you, protecting you, and saving you? How you are becoming more obedient to God, and with what result?

### **Let us pray** (together)

Grant, almighty God that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy which we keep in honour of the risen Lord, and what we relive in remembrance we may always hold to in what we do. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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