

*And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind, and it
filled the entire house in which they were.*

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:2

Tongues of Fire

When I was a child, I thought the flames I saw atop the heads of the apostles in the pictures depicting Pentecost turned them into living candles. That certainly is what the pictures suggested. Only many years later did I come to realize that was exactly what had happened: the Spirit of God set them on fire.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the phrase “Spirit of God” refers to the dynamic power of God at work in the world. To be filled with the Spirit is to operate with this dynamic power. Today’s first reading tells us that those in the house “filled with the holy Spirit” began fearlessly to tell of “the mighty acts of God” (Acts 2:4, 11). They were indeed set on fire.

This Spirit might be dynamic, even forceful, but it is not violent or destructive. The sequence for the feast lists some of the ways we experience the Spirit of God: the Spirit enlightens and comforts us; it refreshes us and lets us rest; it heals our wounds and washes away our guilt; it softens hearts that are stubborn and melts hearts that are cold; it grants us gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. This is a Spirit of gentle and loving power. It is a Spirit that transforms us so that we, in turn, might transform our world. In other words, it sets us on fire so that we too might fearlessly tell of “the mighty acts of God.”

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- ✱ *Spend some time reflecting on the characteristics of the Spirit. How have you experienced this Spirit in your life?*
- ✱ *How might the Spirit be working through you in the lives of others?*

Dear Padre,

Why is there now a Mass honoring Mary after Pentecost?

The eleven apostles and some women, including Mary the Mother of Jesus, were praying in the upper room when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, which descended upon them as a strong wind and as tongues of fire (see Acts 1:13–14; 2:1–13). This is the final time Mary’s name appears in the New Testament. In Luke’s Acts of the Apostles, the same Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary at the annunciation in Luke 1:38 now comes upon her during Pentecost. “Just as the Incarnation of the Spirit had formed the physical body of Christ in her virginal womb, now in the upper room the same Spirit comes down to give life to the Mystical Body” (St. John Paul II, general audience, May 28, 1997).

Thus, the Virgin Mary, full of grace and filled with the Holy Spirit, is both the Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. “Mary is the mother of the members of Christ, because with charity she cooperated in the rebirth of the faithful into the Church,” wrote St. Augustine (354–430).

In 1975, *The Roman Missal* included a votive Mass honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary under her ancient title, Mother of the Church. However, in 2018, Pope Francis elevated this votive Mass to an annual obligatory memorial in the General Roman Calendar, observed on the Monday following Pentecost (also called Whit Monday).

Mary is a model for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, exemplifying “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23).

Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR

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PENTECOST BY NAVARRO PEREZ DOLZ (1990). RENATA SEDMAKOVA / SHUTTERSTOCK



A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

The Holy Spirit...reminds us that first of all we are God's beloved children; all equal, in this respect, and all different. The Spirit comes to us, in our differences and difficulties, to tell us that we have one Lord—Jesus—and one Father, and that for this reason we are brothers and sisters!

PENTECOST HOMILY, MAY 31, 2020

Calendar

Monday

MAY 24

Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the Church

Gn 3:9–15, 20

or Acts 1:12–14

Jn 19:25–34

Tuesday

MAY 25

Weekday

Sir 35:1–12

Mk 10:28–31

Wednesday

MAY 26

St. Philip Neri, Priest

Sir 36:1, 4–5a, 10–17

Mk 10:32–45

Thursday

MAY 27

Weekday

Sir 42:15–25

Mk 10:46–52

Friday

MAY 28

Weekday

Sir 44:1, 9–13

Mk 11:11–26

Saturday

MAY 29

Weekday

Sir 51:12cd–20

Mk 11:27–33

Sunday

MAY 30

The Most Holy Trinity

Dt 4:32–34, 39–40

Rom 8:14–17

Mt 28:16–20

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