

CHAPTER 23

The Giver of Life

After the Ascension, the apostles returned to the upstairs room where they were staying in Jerusalem. They were willing to obey the command of Jesus and preach the gospel to the world, but they did not know where to start. What would they say to people? How should they travel, separately or in a group? What would they do if the Temple leaders tried to arrest them? Most of all, they wondered how they could teach in a way that would really move the hearts of the people, and convince them to receive Baptism.

The apostles knew there was only one thing to do—wait. That was what Jesus had said, “Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). That power would be the Holy Spirit, of whom Jesus had spoken many times. “He will teach you all things, and make you remember all that I have told you.”

So the apostles gathered with the other followers of Jesus and stayed indoors for nine days, praying constantly. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was with them too. They chose a new apostle to replace Judas: Matthias was his name. During that time they prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the tenth day, the sound of a roaring wind filled the house. Tongues as of fire appeared and came to rest upon their heads. The Holy Spirit had come. The apostles lost all fear of punishment and

death. Their one burning desire was to proclaim the Good News. They rushed out of the house, and found a ready-made audience: the people of Jerusalem had heard the roar of wind coming from the house and had gathered there to see what was going on. The apostles began preaching, and those listening were amazed. Many of them were Jews from foreign lands, visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Yet each of them heard the apostles preach in his own language: Greek, Latin, Arabic, and more. This gift of tongues was given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter stood up and explained to the people that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. He proclaimed that Jesus had risen from the dead and was truly the promised Messiah. Through Jesus’ death, said Peter, the grace of salvation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were available to everyone in Baptism.

Moved by Peter’s words, three thousand people received Baptism that day. And so the Church of Christ made its beginning. Every year we celebrate this day on the feast of Pentecost. The word “pentecost” means “fifty days”. The Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles fifty days after the Resurrection of Jesus. The Jews celebrated their feast of Pentecost as the fiftieth day after Passover. Now the Church had both a new Passover—the death and Resurrection of Jesus—

“I believe in the Holy Spirit. . .”



God Sends His Spirit

The Holy Spirit fills our souls at Baptism, and again in a more special way at Confirmation. With the Divine Love of God within us, we are able to love God and neighbor. “Do you not know” said Saint Paul “that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16).

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is given different names that help describe him. At different places in the Gospels Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, and the Sanctifier. These names all remind us that the Holy Spirit is God’s special gift to us. He comes to us with the gifts of wisdom, knowledge of truth, strength in our faith (that is what comfort means), and sanctity (holiness).

Besides living in each of us, the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church today. Ever since the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been guiding the Church. The Spirit reminded the apostles of everything Jesus taught, so that they could teach without making any error. Whenever a problem came up in the early Church, the Holy Spirit guided the apostles to find the right solution. This divine guidance was needed even more after the apostles died, because later false teachers came with their own ideas of what Christians ought to believe. Whenever Christians needed to know what the truth really was, they had only to turn to the bishops of the Church. As successors to the apostles, bishops under the leadership of Peter’s successor, the Pope, had the power to teach and defend the true faith.

The Holy Spirit is at work in Christ’s Church in many ways. He inspires and prompts both individual Christians and the Church as a

and a new Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.

The Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. He is equal with the Father and the Son. It can be hard for us to think about the Holy Spirit. The words “Father” and “Son” give us human images to think about. The Holy Spirit is represented at times by the symbol of a dove or of fire, but these things don’t tell us much about him.

Church teachings have explained that the Holy Spirit is actually the Love that God the Father and God the Son have for one another. This Love is so perfect and so great that it is another Person, equal to the Father and Son.

whole to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. He may inspire the Pope to give an important message to the world. He may inspire your bishop to open a school for handicapped children. He can move your parents to pray that their children will be saints. He can prompt you to encourage a friend to come to church

with you. All these and more are actions of the Holy Spirit in our world.

Words to Know:

Pentecost Sanctifier Comforter

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who is Lord and Giver of life, who is adored and glorified, together with the Father and the Son. He spoke to us by the prophets; he was sent by Christ after his Resurrection and his Ascension to the Father; he illuminates, vivifies, protects, and guides the Church; he purifies the Church's members if they do not shun his grace. His action, which penetrates to the inmost of the soul, enables man to respond to the call of Jesus: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

(Credo of the People of God)

Come, Holy Spirit, Creator blest,
And in our souls take up your rest;
Come with your grace and heavenly aid
To fill the hearts which you have made.

O Comforter, to you we cry,
O heavenly Gift of God Most High,
O fount of life and fire of love,
And sweet anointing from above.