

Pentecost



Prayer of the Day

Almighty God our Father, dwelling in majesty and mystery, renewing and fulfilling creation by your eternal Spirit, and revealing your glory through our Lord Jesus Christ: Cleanse us from doubt and fear, and enable us to worship you, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, living and reigning, now and forever.

Or

God our creator, earth has many languages, but your Gospel announces your love to all nations in one heavenly speech. Make us messengers of the good news that, through the power of your Spirit, everyone everywhere may unite in one song of praise; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

Acts 2:1-21

{1} When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. {2} 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. {3} Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. {4} All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. {5} Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. {6} And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. {7} Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? {8} And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? {9} Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, {10} Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, {11} Cretans and Arabs--in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." {12} All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" {13} But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." {14} But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. {15} Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. {16} No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: {17} 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. {18} Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. {19} And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. {20} The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. {21} Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

1. Pentecost: The Feast of Weeks occurred seven weeks (a week of weeks plus one day, or fifty days) after the presentation of the first sheaf of the barley harvest at Passover (Leviticus 23:15-21). The date was associated with the arrival of the Israelites at Mt. Sinai at the time of the Exodus, and therefore with the giving of the law (Exodus 19:1). According to Acts 1:3 Jesus appeared to his disciples during forty days. At the end of that time he ascended into heaven. Ten days later the Spirit is bestowed on them.

they were all together: About 120 people, cf. Acts 1:15. See also Luke 24:33; Acts 1:6, 14: The whole of the Christian community shared this definitive experience.

2. the house where they were sitting: Ancient tradition identifies this house with the

house where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper, and the "room where they were staying" (Acts 1:13).

a sound like the rush of a mighty wind: The same Hebrew (*ruah*) and Greek (*pneuma*) mean wind, breath and spirit. The *ruah/pneuma/wind/breath/spirit* all have in common the idea that they are the substance of life (see Psalm 104:29). Here the mighty wind, representing God's vital breath, is heard.

3. *tongues, as of fire*: Luke 3:16: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (*hagios pneumatos*, "holy wind") and fire." Acts 1:5: "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." "This is their baptism. It is the moment when their apostolate becomes pneumatic or Spirit graced; from this point on all that the apostles do will be under the guidance of the Spirit." [1]

4. *began to speak in other languages*: This is one kind of speaking in tongues. The other, ecstatic *glossalalia*, is described in 1 Corinthians 14:2-19. See also Acts 10:46.

5. *devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem*: "Jews," properly "Judeans." They are living there at least for the festival of Pentecost. Some of the places from which they have come are mentioned in verses 9-11.

6-7: The apostles, Galileans, are contrasted with the devout Judeans from every nation under the sun.

in the native language of each: The apostles speak in "other languages," languages known and recognized by those who heard them as their own native languages. The reversal of the confusion of language at Babel is the beginning of the reunification of human kind, between human beings and also between human beings and God.

8. "...the miracle seems at first to have been auditory not vocal, in that the assembled Jews were each enabled to hear them speaking 'in his own language,' but v 4 has already described it as a vocal miracle, produced by the Spirit given to the Galileans. Whether auditory or vocal, the miracle conveys the idea that the gift of the Spirit transcends all bounds: the Christian message is to be borne to people of all languages and cultures." Those who heard in their own languages were not people of "all cultures." [2] They were all devout Jews! This is only the first step on the way to the universal church. In Acts 10 Luke tells how the Gospel was preached to Gentiles, and describes their response in terms similar to these, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God" (Acts 10:44-46a).

13. *They are filled with new wine*: The grape harvest occurred after the grain harvest, and was celebrated with its own festival fifty days after Pentecost. "Luke may have... alluded to the Pentecost of New Wine, when speaking...of the Pentecost of New Grain." [3]

14. *the eleven*: Peter and the eleven, including Matthias, who was chosen to replace Judas, makes twelve.

14b-21: In his "sermon" Peter explains what was seen and heard. The apostles are not drunk. They are the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. Fitzmyer outlines the speech as follows:

"Introduction 2:14b-15

OT Quotation to Clarify the Situation 2:16-21

Kerygma 2:22-24, 32-33

OT Quotation to Relate Jesus to David 2:15-31, 34-35

Climactic Conclusion: Testimony 2:36

Hortatory Conclusion 2:28-39" [4]

17. *In the last days it will be, God declares:* Joel 2:28-29. In Joel the specification is *afterward*. "Luke thus gives to the quotation a new eschatological orientation and ascribes the prophets words to God himself." [5]

Or Genesis 11:1-9

{1} Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. {2} And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. {3} And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. {4} Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." {5} The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. {6} And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. {7} Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." {8} So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. {9} Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

5. *The Lord came down to see the city:* Their great work "with its top in the heavens" was so tiny in relationship to God's immense creation that he had to "come down" close to see it.

6: In Genesis 3:24 God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden to forestall them from eating of the tree of life and living forever. Here he confuses human language so that human beings will not be able to accomplish otherwise impossible tasks, and do whatever they propose.

7. *let us...confuse their language:* There are various theories concerning the development of language, and specifically the development of fundamentally different languages. The answer provided by the biblical account is not just a different theory, but an answer at a different level: human beings used their common language, not to glorify God, but to "make a name for themselves." So God, to prevent them from doing whatever they propose to do confused their language, and broke their unity.

9. *it was called Babel:* The name Babel (*Babili* in Assyrian) means "gate of God." The biblical story gave the name a popular etymology based on the Hebrew verb *balal*, "to mix," "to confuse" referring to the confusion of language that took place there. [6]

Psalms 104:24-34, 35b

{24} O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. {25} Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. {26} There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. {27} These all look to you to give them their food in due season; {28} when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. {29} When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. {30} When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. {31} May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works-- {32} who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. {33} I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. {34} May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.... {35b} Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!

24. *In wisdom you have made them all:* See Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:18-19. Wisdom is the first of God's creations, Proverbs 8:12-31.

26. *Leviathan that you formed to sport in it:* This is one of my favorite verses. While there is purpose and intent behind Yahweh's creative acts, not everything God does has a high and noble purpose. Leviathan was created to play in the sea. We should be careful not take matters more seriously than God does.

27-30. *you give them their food...you hide your face, they are dismayed...you send forth your spirit...you renew the face of the earth:* The fortunes of the creation and its creatures depend completely on Yahweh. The earth is full of Yahweh's creatures; they are result of his [*pneuma*], his wind, breath, Spirit. The singer praises Yahweh for his wisdom and creative power, and promises to sing his praises as long as (s)he lives.

31-34: The singer praises the works of Yahweh, who has authority over the creation.

Romans 8:14-17 or Acts 2:1-21

{14} For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. {15} For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" {16} it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

14. *children of God:* "The mortification of the deeds of the body mentioned in 8:13 does not really constitute Christian life, necessary though it may be for the living of it. The Spirit instead animates and activates Christians, making them children of God." [7]

15. *spirit of adoption:* Through adoption by God we are included in his "honor." We are his and share in all his qualities and qualifications, and enjoy his inheritance.

Abba: A familiar term for father in Aramaic; perhaps something like "poppa."

17. *heirs:* As God's adopted children we share in the estate. "The Christian as such an adopted son, is not only admitted into God's family, but by reason of the same gratuitous adoption receives the right to become master of his Father's estate. Despite having no natural right to it, he acquires title by adoption through the Spirit." [8] However, we have no rights of our own; if we abuse his honor we will be cut off.

suffer with him...glorified with him: What we suffer as Christians is not our suffering, but rather our participation in Christ's sufferings. And our participation in those sufferings is as certain as our sharing his glorification, and our being admitted into the Father's family as heirs.

John 14:8-17 [25-27]

{8} Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." {9} Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? {10} Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. {11} Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. {12} Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. {13} I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. {15} "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. {16} And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. {17} This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.... [25] "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. {26} But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. {27} Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.]

8. *Philip:* Philip's request is a response to Jesus' somewhat cryptic statement, "If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" in the preceding verse, and a follow-up to Thomas' question: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" The disciples are confused.

9. *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father:* "For the Gospel of John Jesus is the appearance of the unseen Father in this world (v. 9). In Jesus the Father who sent him

becomes visible to those believing.... When Jesus says, as the word of the Father (12:49), "I am the bread of life," "I am the light of the world," "I am the resurrection and the life," the Father is thereby made known as the merciful one, as the loving God...."

[9]

10-12: Jesus points to his testimony that he and the Father are one, and to his works that demonstrate that.

13-14. *I will do whatever you ask in my name*: The disciples "works are placed under [Jesus'] protection and are therefore conceived as a prayer in his name, which he himself will fulfill." [10]

15. *love me...keep my commandments*: "love for Jesus is not taken here as a feeling; the misunderstanding that love is a sentiment is excluded by virtue of the fact that it is represented as obedience to an instruction." [11] This is repeated in verse 23, and expanded to include the contrary: "Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me."

16-17: At Jesus' request the Father will send another Advocate (Paraclete), the Spirit of truth, whom the disciples know, but the world cannot receive.

26: The Holy Spirit will teach the disciples everything and remind them of what Jesus taught them.

27: The peace Jesus leaves with his disciples is not just a word of salutation, or a word of leave-taking. Instead it is a declaration of God's presence and final control.

Comment: "The problem with which the Evangelist struggles in this chapter consists in this: how is the experience of the spirit that dominates him and that has given him his new understanding of Jesus related to the tradition of the return of Jesus that has been transmitted to him?.... He...interpreted the primitive Christian tradition of the return of Jesus at the end of time as just another form of what he himself had experienced.... he set the two expressions alongside each other...and left it to the reader to discover the identity of the traditional and his own 'modern' mode of expression and perspectives." [12]

Reflection

"Pentecost originated as a final celebration of the ingathering of the grain harvest which had begun at passover. Later Judaism transformed it into a feast of salvation history, celebrating the giving of the Law at Sinai and the establishment of Israel as God's people. All of these associations were carried over into the Christian feast that marked the conclusion of the great fifty days. The grain harvest and the Law are replaced by the gift of the Spirit, and the constitution of the old Israel, by the constitution of the new. The feast of the Law becomes the feast of the Spirit." [13]

"'Show us the Father,' Philip blurts out; 'Why doesn't God say something, do something?' another asks. John's answer is that in Jesus of Nazareth, God's only Son, God has indeed said something and done something. This is good news that needs telling and retelling. That is where we come in; however, the task is not ours alone, and that is where the Holy Spirit comes in." [14]

Hymns [15]

With One Voice (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).
E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson;
G=Gospel

459 --E--O Holy Spirit,
160 --D--Filled with the

688v --II--O Holy Spirit
715v --II--Open Your Ears

163 --D--Come, Holy Ghost,
682v --I--Praise the Spirit
(751s)
413 --I--Father Eternal, Ruler
164 --II--Creator Spirit, by

750s --G--O Holy Spirit,
680v --G--O Spirit of Life
508, 387, 473, 719v/777s,
775v, 756v/748s, 681v,
685v

Prayers of the People [16]

P or A: As the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, so we open ourselves to the Spirit of God, that we might live as God would have us. We pray "Send us your Spirit, Lord." and respond "Come, Holy Spirit."

A: For all of creation, that we may care for your world through mindful and respectful living. Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For all the baptized, that we may praise you, our loving Father, for the gift of a spirit of adoption which transforms death into eternal life.
Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For missionaries and others who profess their faith in places where they may be persecuted for their beliefs, that they may know that to suffer with Christ is to be glorified with him.
Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the youth of this congregation, that they may see visions and dream dreams to your glory.
Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the sick and the dying, that they might be renewed by your healing Spirit. We pray for _____.
Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

A: For the children of the world, especially the destitute and the orphaned. Enable us to reach out to them in love, offering hope and shelter from violence.
Send us your Spirit, Lord. Come...

P: Jesus Christ promised his disciples that he would intercede on their behalf when they prayed in his name. Let the words of our hearts be faithful and sincere as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Or [17]

Presider or deacon

Crying Abba, Father,

let the children of God offer prayers for the needs, concerns, and hopes of all the world.

Deacon or other leader

For peace from on high and for our salvation.

For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all.

For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

For the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

For all those in need, the suffering and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, and all the saints, let us

offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, God our Father, who sends us the Spirit of truth. Hear the prayers we offer this day and breathe upon your holy people. Glory to you for ever and ever.

Notes

[1] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 1998, p. 235.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[3] *Loc. cit.*

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[6] Helmer Ringgren, “[*babhel*],” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren). Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977, vol. 1, p. 466.

[7] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 1993, p. 499.

[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 502.

[9] Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, pp. 124-125.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[11] *Loc. cit.*

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[13] Reginald H. Fuller, *Preaching the New Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1974, pp. 37-38.

[14] “John 14:8-17,” *Interpretation* XLIII:170-174.

[15] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[16] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

[17] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>