



Pentecost Sunday, Cycle A Readings & Background



This Sunday's Readings

First Reading

Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

☞ Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles gathered in Jerusalem.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 104:1,24,29-31,34

God's Spirit renews the earth.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7,12-13

We are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading

John 20:19-23

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

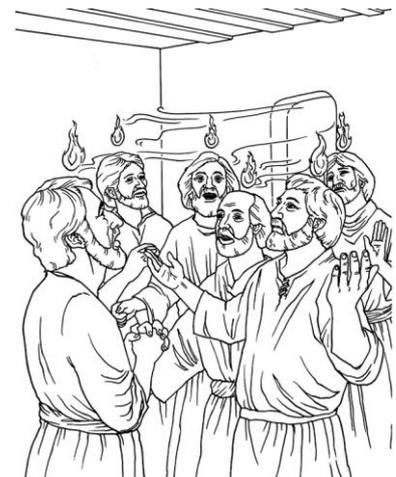
Background on the Gospel Reading

The Season of Easter concludes with today's celebration, **the Feast of Pentecost**.

On Pentecost we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem; **this event marks the beginning of the Church.**

The story of Pentecost is found in the Acts of the Apostles, today's first reading.

The account in today's Gospel, John 20:19-23, also recounts how Jesus gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Yet the event in John's Gospel takes place on Easter Sunday. There is no need to try to reconcile these two accounts. It is enough that we know that after his death, Jesus fulfilled his promise to send to his disciples a helper, an advocate, who would enable them to be his witnesses throughout the world.



We already heard today's Gospel proclaimed on the Second Sunday of Easter this year (Lectionary Cycle A). That Gospel passage, however, also included the description of Jesus' appearance to Thomas. In that context, we were led reflect on belief and unbelief.

In the context of the Feast of Pentecost, John 20:19-23 **reminds us about the integral connection between the gifts of peace and forgiveness and the action of the Holy Spirit.** Jesus greets his disciples with the gift of peace. Jesus then commissions his disciples to continue the work that he has begun, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He breathes the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and sends them to continue his work of reconciliation through the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' act of breathing the Holy Spirit mirrors God's act of breathing life into Adam at the time of Creation. **In fact, both the Greek and Hebrew words for "spirit" can also be translated as "breath."**

This Gospel reminds us that the Church is called to be a reconciling presence in the world.

The reconciling presence of Christ is celebrated in the Church's sacramental life. In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are cleansed of sin and become a new creation in Christ. In the Sacrament of Penance, the Church celebrates the mercy of God through the forgiving of sins. This reconciling presence is also to be a way of life for Christians. In situations of conflict, we are to be agents of peace and harmony among people.



Pentecost Sunday, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)



Gospel Reading : John 20:19-23

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Young children are beginning to be aware that there are times when they do not do the things that they should. They can be very sensitive to the frustration and anger of those around them when they have done wrong. Today's Gospel offers them the reassurance that God has sent his forgiving mercy to us.

Materials Needed

- Ping-pong ball
- Styrofoam cup

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Bring a ping-pong ball and a Styrofoam cup to class.
After Jesus was killed, his friends were afraid they would be punished as well. They hid in a room and hoped they would not be discovered.
Drop the ping-pong ball into the cup and cover the cup with your hand.
2. ***Jesus did not want his friends to hide in fear. He wanted them to be brave and to show people the love and forgiveness of God. He could see that his friends needed help to do this. Today's Gospel tells us about what Jesus did to help his disciples. Let's listen carefully as we read today's Gospel.*** Read John 20:19-23.
3. ***Jesus knew that his disciples would need the courage of the Holy Spirit—the same courage that Jesus had when he died so that our sins would be forgiven. Jesus released the disciples from fear by breathing the Holy Spirit on them.***
Blow into the Styrofoam cup, and the ball will come flying out.
4. ***But Jesus did even more. The Gospel this week tells us that Jesus gave his friends courage and the power to release others from fear by forgiving their sins.***
Place the ping-pong ball in the cup again.
When we do something that we know God would not like, we fear God's punishment. We forget how much God loves us, and we become trapped by sin.
Place your hand over the top of the cup. Say: ***Jesus gave his apostles—and all the priests of his Church—the power to forgive us in God's name when we are truly sorry for our sins. Then we are free to start over and to live as God wants us to live.***
Blow into the cup again to propel the ping-pong ball.
5. Conclude by praying together that the Holy Spirit will help us be confident that God will always forgive our sins. Pray together today's Psalm or the **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Pentecost Sunday, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)



Gospel Reading : John 20:19-23

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Young people are aware of, sensitive to, and sometimes even a part of situations of conflict. As we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, our Gospel reminds us that this same Holy Spirit helps us to be agents of God's peace and forgiveness in the world.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Ask the group to name some situations in which greater peace is needed. These situations could be taken from current events, historical events, or contemporary school or family life situations.
2. Invite the group to choose one of the situations named, and then help the group to identify some of the issues involved in this conflict. Ask questions such as these: ***Why is peace lacking in this situation? What are some of the issues being contested? What would it take to restore peace in this situation?***
3. Say: ***When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his Resurrection, his first words to them were a greeting of peace. This was welcome news to the disciples. Let's listen to today's Gospel to find out why this was such welcome news.***
4. Invite one or more volunteers to read today's Gospel, John 20:19-23.
5. Ask: ***Why might Jesus' greeting of peace have been so welcome to his disciples?*** (They were gathered in the upper room in fear; they had witnessed Jesus' death on the cross.) Say: ***As witnesses to Jesus' death, the disciples had been very much a part of a situation of conflict. They gathered together in fear, perhaps because they thought that some people would seek their deaths as well. They very much needed to hear Jesus' words of peace and reassurance.***
6. Say: ***The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' first disciples. This same Holy Spirit is still with us. After breathing upon them and giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit, what does Jesus tell his disciples to do?*** (to forgive sins)
7. Say: ***Just as Jesus sent his disciples to forgive the sins of others, so too are we sent to bring peace to the world. And we also have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us with this task.***
8. Say: ***Looking back at the situation of conflict we talked about at the beginning, what might the Holy Spirit lead us to do to help bring peace to this situation of conflict?*** (Accept all reasonable answers; if appropriate, make a choice to do one of these actions as a group.)
9. Conclude by praying together that the Holy Spirit will continue to work through us to bring peace to the world. Pray together today's Psalm or the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Share with one another a Sign of Peace.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.





Pentecost Sunday, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)



Gospel Reading : John 20:19-23

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Young people are familiar with breaking things. They know that some broken things can be repaired or put back together. In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we might be reconciled—put back together—through the forgiveness of sins.

Materials Needed

- Craft sticks (one for every two young people)
- Transparent tape

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Bring in craft sticks. Break the sticks in half, mix them up, and randomly distribute them to the young people.
2. Then invite each person to find the person whose half matches his or her half. When everyone has found his or her half, instruct the pairs to put the two pieces back together using tape.
3. Point out that the word **reconcile** means "**to make compatible** or to re-establish a close relationship." In other words, it means to put back together.
4. Tell the young people that in this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we might be reconciled.
5. Invite one or more volunteers to read this Sunday's Gospel, John 20:19-23.
6. ***The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' first disciples. This same Holy Spirit is still with us. After giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit, what does Jesus tell his disciples to do? (to forgive sins)***
7. ***Just as Jesus sent his disciples to forgive the sins of others, so too we are sent to bring reconciliation to the world. We have also been given the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us with this task.***
8. Conclude by praying together that the Holy Spirit will continue to work through us to bring peace to the world. Pray together today's psalm or the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Share with one another a Sign of Peace.



Pentecost Sunday, Cycle A Family Connection



Gospel Reading - John 20:19-23

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is sometimes called the birthday of the Church.

The Gospel for Pentecost reminds us that the Church begins with the command to forgive. Within the family, the domestic Church, we learn how to forgive and how to accept forgiveness.

The gift of the Holy Spirit enables us to do both. Today is a fitting time to share a family celebration of reconciliation.

As you gather together as a family, sit quietly for a few minutes, inviting everyone to reflect upon their need to forgive and to receive forgiveness. If there is a situation or an issue within the family that needs attention, spend some time reflecting on how your family might address it.

Read together today's Gospel, John 20:19-23.

Talk together about how **Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit** to help us in the work of **forgiveness and to bring us peace**.

Pray together today's Psalm or the **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**, asking that the Holy Spirit help your family.

Share with one another a Sign of Peace.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit, help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.