

FEAST OF PENTECOST

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST IS CONSIDERED THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH. And with great reason, for the Church was born of the Holy Spirit on the Day of the Jewish Pentecost fifty days after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”(Acts 2: 1-4)

The Feast of Pentecost was the second most important feast in the Jewish Calendar, after the Feast of Passover. It was not by accident that our Lord Jesus Christ died on the feast of the Jewish Passover, because for God, nothing is accidental but planned in His mind since the beginning of time. The Paschal mysteries of Christ celebrated on the Passover weekend of the Jews, clearly revealed the intentions of our Lord to replace the Jewish Passover with the New Passover within the context of the New and Everlasting Covenant to be established with the Church, the symbol of the New Israel.

Likewise, it was not by accident that the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles on the Feast of the Jewish Pentecost, usually celebrated fifty days after Passover. For the Jews, Pentecost was a day of Thanksgiving to the Lord for the great things that He has done for His people. It was called the ‘**Shavuot**’ and was celebrated seven Sabbaths after Passover.

You shall count for yourselves -- from the day after the Shabbat, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving -- seven Shabbats, they shall be complete. Until the day after the seventh Sabbath you shall count, fifty days... You shall convoke on this very day -- there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves -- you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations. -Leviticus 21:15-16, 21

For the Jews, therefore, Pentecost was a time for thanksgiving, a time for giving rest to the land and for the time for the celebration of life and prosperity in the Promised Land. The Jews celebrated Pentecost by reading the Book of the Law and by remembering the wonderful things the Lord had done for His people. The time between the Jewish Passover and Pentecost has always been the time of joyful expectation and grateful spirit. Hence the Christian Pentecost also takes on this beautiful and meaningful activity as the Time for Thanksgiving and celebration of Life, Love, and Peace.

The Holy Spirit came to the Apostles in the same way as He came in creation, that is, as the mighty wind to usher in the beginning of the New Creation redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. He came as tongues of fire to empower the church to proclaim salvation for all men through and by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. The Holy Spirit is indeed the spirit of truth and life for all of humanity. Through our baptism and Confirmation, we were “*sealed the promised Holy Spirit which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s possession, to the praise of His glory.*” (Ephesians 1:13-14). Indeed, it is only by the Holy Spirit that we can know God, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. It is only by the Holy Spirit that we become the children of God and heirs of heaven. The

Catechism of the Catholic Church declares in # 687 that:

"No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."² Now God's Spirit, who reveals God, makes known to us Christ, his Word, his living Utterance, but the Spirit does not speak of himself. The Spirit who "has spoken through the prophets" makes us hear the Father's Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself. We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. the Spirit of truth who "unveils" Christ to us "will not speak on his own."⁸ Such properly divine self-effacement explains why "the world cannot receive (him), because it neither sees him nor knows him," while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them."² (CCC # 687)

Who is the Holy Spirit and what does He do for us as the Third Person of the Holy Trinity?

For many of us Catholics, the Holy Spirit is probably the least known and understood among the Persons of the Holy Trinity. However, The Holy Spirit is mentioned all over the Sacred Scriptures. For example, The Holy Spirit was the very same Spirit of God (the mighty wind) that hovered over the waters at the very beginning of Creation (Gen. 1:1). Throughout all of Salvation History, the Holy Spirit has been the living and dynamic presence of the Divine as He manifests His presence through His power that sustains all of creation from the beginning, and drives it to its destiny in the age to come. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Christian Pentecost, therefore, was therefore a new beginning for the New People of God redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb. He came on the same day of the Jewish Thanksgiving to give birth to the Church as the first fruit of the Salvific Act of Christ. The Holy Spirit was promised by the Father and Son so that by His Coming upon the Church, He might begin to renew the face of the earth and form the sprout of the Kingdom of God, the New Creation. The Holy Spirit is the indissoluble bond between the Father and the Son and dynamic link between God and His people.

Today, The Holy Spirit remains actively present in our lives through the communion of Love which He establishes and sustains among all the baptized as members of the One Body of Christ-the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Holy Spirit manifests His presence to us through the Holy Scriptures inspired by Him, the Sacred Tradition witnessed by the Fathers of the Church, the Magisterium of the Church, in the Sacramental Liturgies. The Christian Prayer, in the Charisms and Gifts that come from Him, in the signs of the Missionary life inspired by Him, and in the lives of the saints in whom He manifests His Holiness and continues His work of Salvation. (Cfr. CCC # 688.

The Holy Spirit is active in our lives through the sacramental graces we receive. The Holy Spirit still dwells in the Church for He is her life and the guarantee of the truth she bears. He guides and inspires the Holy Church through her leaders and members with the gifts of wisdom and truth to continue the saving work of Christ, so that God may *"sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth."* (Ephesians 1:10). During Pentecost, therefore, the Church does not only celebrate her birthday but also remembers the mission she has received from Christ to proclaim the gospel to all nations and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord (Luke 4:19)