

# PENTECOST

## Prayer

### Collect of the Day

O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### Scripture Readings

Psalms 143 (antiphon v. 10)

Genesis 11:1-9

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:23-31

### Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 497

Other Hymns – 650 (OT), 913

(OT), 500 (G), 501 (G), 768 (G)

Gracious Lord, Your Spirit fills the world and gladdens Your Church with the remembrance of all Christ Jesus has spoken. Comfort us with divine peace, and do not let our hearts be troubled or afraid. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, as You once chose apostles to proclaim the resurrection, so open the mouths of Your pastors and people to declare His praises to all who will hear. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord God, sustain those who are mocked for believing and confessing the truth of Your Word, that they may remain faithful to You. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have poured out Your Spirit upon us, that we might believe Your truth and raise our sons and daughters in it. Bless all parents, that they may faithfully catechize their children in Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of might, preserve Your people from their enemies, bring peace to the nations and prosper the cause of life. Bless our leaders and all judges and magistrates. Give them a relentless pursuit of just laws for the common good of all, with a heart of mercy for the weak and vulnerable. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of compassion, forget not the sick and the suffering. Grant them healing according to Your will [especially do we name before You \_\_\_\_\_]. Give them confidence that You know their need and will well supply them with all that they need to endure to the day of Your coming, when all affliction will end and You will grant the perfect consummation to us and to all who have loved Your appearing. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord of grace, Your Son has come among us and given us the privilege of a place at His table. Prepare us to receive His body and blood with repentance and faith, for our good

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and for the flowering in our lives of Your holiness and righteousness. Nourish and feed us, that in this Holy Communion we may be strengthened for Your service. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Almighty Father, with Your Son, Jesus Christ, send Your Holy Spirit into our hearts through Your Word to rule and govern us according to Your will, comfort us in every temptation and misfortune, and defend us against every error, that we may continue steadfast in the faith, increase in love and good works, and — trusting firmly in Your grace for us by His death — obtain eternal salvation; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



# PENTECOST SERMON

DAY OF PENTECOST

June 5, 2022

**Sermon Text: John 14:23-31**

*'To God The Holy Spirit Let Us Pray'*

In the name of the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Amen.

Despite the fact that we owe our very existence to the original “let us” that was spoken by God at the beginning of creation, when He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”; the sinful and fallen human race, however, including you and me, has forgotten this – succumbing over and over again to the lie of the devil by which he first seduced our first parents, Adam and Eve, “you will be like God.”

Today’s Old Testament Reading, the account of the tower of Babel, represents the pinnacle of mankind’s arrogance to live apart from God, of his self-centredness, of his vain and feeble attempts to scale the heights of heaven by his own efforts, of his intent to go it alone, of his desire to make a name for himself while ignoring and rejecting God’s holy name. They will build a temple-tower, known as a zigurat, that would be the link between heaven and earth, and which would serve as an imposing symbol of their rule over all creation, of their greatness, a monument to their glory. Instead of hearing God’s “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”; they turn this all around – “Let us make God in our image, after our likeness. Let us make bricks. Let us build ourselves a tower with its top in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves.”

And the judgment of God upon their sin and unbelief, their pride and arrogance, comes swift and sure; as He speaks another “let us” – “Let us go down to see the city and the tower; which the children of man are building. Let us go down

and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." And with the result that, as we read, "So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth."

The opposite of all this is recorded in today's appointed Second Reading from the book of Acts – the account of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven once again, being poured out upon the disciples, enabling them to speak in languages that all the people gathered there in Jerusalem could understand, a message that is meant for all people and which brings people from every tribe and nation and language back together, back to God – this message: "the mighty works of God, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

And that we today might be included in this great Babel-reversal, that we might truly ascend to our Creator and be like Him and be saved, it is necessary that we ourselves now speak another "let us"; as the opening words of the hymn puts it, "To God the Holy Spirit let us pray."

The first stanza of this 13th century hymn reads as follows: "To God the Holy Spirit let us pray For the true faith needed on our way That He may defend us when life is ending And from exile home we are wending. Lord, have mercy!"

Now, the words of the first line proclaim to us very clearly that the Holy Spirit is God – the third person of The Holy Trinity. Already back in Genesis, chapter 1, we are told that the Holy Spirit was involved in the creation of all things. So we read: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." And then, Jesus' own words shortly before He ascended into heaven mention all three persons of the Triune God, when He says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

And the very first thing that we pray to the Holy Spirit is "for the true faith needed on our way." But is this really our first and foremost prayer request – "for the true faith needed on our way"? Oh, to be sure, unlike so many Babel-people

these days who never call on the name of the Lord and who, instead, would make a name for themselves and strive to ascend to heaven by their own works and efforts; we, at least, do pray. But then, what is it that we primarily pray for? “Our life, goods, fame, child and wife,” to use Luther’s words from his famous hymn; that is, for the things that pertain to the here and now, to our earthly life, to God’s material and physical gifts.

But here, however, we are reminded that our chief prayer request must be “for the true faith needed on our way.” And this is so because, as St. Paul writes in Ephesians, “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works.” Or, as the writer of Hebrews says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Yes, faith – the greatest gift that the Holy Spirit would bestow upon us; for it alone can take us safely through this life to our heavenly home. And as baptized children of God, our real home, you see, is not here on earth. “Our citizenship is in heaven,” is how St. Paul puts it in Philippians. And as we journey through this sinful, unbelieving world, what is it that we need most of all? Is it not this – that God the Holy Spirit would “defend us when life is ending And from exile home we are wending,” that He would preserve us in the one true saving faith – the faith we confess in the words of the Creed.

In the 16th century the Reformer, Martin Luther, would add three additional stanzas to this 13th century hymn. The second stanza contains these lyrics: “O sweetest Love, Your grace on us bestow; Set our hearts with sacred fire aglow That with hearts united we love each other, Ev’ry stranger, sister, and brother. Lord, have mercy!”

“O sweetest Love” we here call the Holy Spirit. What a beautiful name! Each one of us is loved by God, and so we ask that by His grace He would “set our hearts with sacred fire aglow.” And this the Holy Spirit does in a twofold sense through the Word of God that is proclaimed to us. In the first place, as we read in the verses just following today’s Second Reading concerning the Day of Pentecost: “Then Peter addressed them, saying, ‘Know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.’ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said, ‘What shall we do?’” Yes, to be cut to the heart, to be filled with guilt over our sins, with remorse, with fear of

suffering forever the fires of hell – that is what the Holy Spirit would first ignite in our hearts, “setting our hearts with sacred fire aglow,” with contrition and sorrow over our living apart from God and His will, over our self-centeredness, over our trying to make a name for ourselves.

But, and in the second place, hearts that are then warmed and comforted by the message that Peter goes on to speak: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, and everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.” Remember the account of the risen Lord Jesus and the two disciples from Emmaus on that first Easter afternoon; how they later said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?”

And with hearts set on fire by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of His Word, with sinful hearts now forgiven, with cold and selfish hearts now warmed by the love of God’s forgiveness in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; our hearts are now also united with love for others – for “ev’ry stranger, sister, and brother.” So St. Paul puts it in Galatians: “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” And that is why we then read of those new believers in Christ following the Day of Pentecost these words: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belonging and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day they attended the temple together and broke bread in their homes with gladness and singleness of heart.”

The hymn continues with the third stanza: “Transcendent Comfort in our ev’ry need, Help us neither scorn nor death to heed That we may not falter nor courage fail us When the foe shall taunt and assail us. Lord, have mercy!”

Here we again address the Holy Spirit, this time calling Him “Transcendent Comfort.” And that is what He is and does. He transcends. He comes down from heaven to earth to comfort us in all our needs. He gives us strength so that we won’t falter or lose courage when the old evil foe taunts us and assails us, saying to us just as he did to our first parents – “Did God really say?” He empowers us to endure the scorn and ridicule of those modern day people of Babel who desire to make a name for themselves while ignoring and rejecting God’s holy name.

Listen to what St. Peter would later write about this courage that the Holy Spirit gives to those who have been baptized in the name of Christ and made brothers and sisters of God's family: "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. And if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."

The hymn then concludes with the fourth stanza: "Shine in our hearts, O Spirit, precious light; Teach us Jesus Christ to know aright That we may abide in the Lord who bought us, Till to our true home He has brought us. Lord, have mercy!"

Now, here we ask God the Holy Spirit to do that of which Jesus says in the Gospel Reading: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." And this is the chief work of the Holy Spirit, of which all the previous are a part – to reveal to us by means of the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ . . . His suffering and death on the cross for us as the atoning sacrifice for our sins . . . His righteousness and holiness that is given to us by faith . . . His peace bestowed on us in the blessed Sacrament of His very body and blood. And preserved in your most holy faith in Christ by the Spirit until your life's end, you will then, as St. Peter says in his First Epistle, "obtain the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your soul," – brought to your true, eternal, heavenly home.

In Ephesians the apostle Paul uses the imagery of the tower of Babel and what happened to the people there when he writes the following about that which took place on the Day of Pentecost and which is also taking place here among us this very day: "You," he says, "are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

And to which we can only fittingly respond in the words from the catechism: "Amen, amen. Yes, yes, may it be so." Amen.