



# Sunday Reflection

# Pentecost



in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone

For Sunday 31 May 2020

## Pentecost Sunday

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus, is poured out upon the first disciples at Pentecost. The Spirit, the energy of God, enables them – and enables us – to go out and share the good news of God's deeds in Jesus Christ with the whole world.

### Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Receive the Holy Spirit."** John 20:22

#### An Illustration to set the scene

For centuries, human beings have harnessed the power of the wind. We learned long ago that boats with sails move faster than boats without. Windmills have caught the wind and ground wheat into flour. Even in the twenty-first century, huge turbines rotate in the wind and provide some of the electricity that powers our homes. Fire, likewise, has enabled us to live: cooking food and heating houses, even at the most basic level. Nature's elements provide us with energy.

While human beings existed long before they thought to harness the power and energy of the elements, making use of God's creation has enabled us to live with purpose and enjoyment. Bringing together human ingenuity and natural resources has led to invention and travel, gastronomy and comfort. The earth's natural resources enable us to do wonderful things. It is interesting

to see that, in scripture, the Holy Spirit, the energy of God, is described in such elemental terms – as wind, fire or water. Jesus breathes the Spirit on his disciples, and the Spirit appears in the Acts of the Apostles in tongues of flame and rushing wind. The Spirit, we are led to understand, is the elemental energy, the power of God that enables us to live with purpose.

### **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

After the crucifixion, the disciples are locked away together in fear of their lives. They have seen their friend and teacher tortured and killed. Jesus stands among them and speaks peace, and then tells them that he is sending them out. They cannot remain behind locked doors for ever. He breathes on them, giving them the Holy Spirit, and immediately we should recognise the connection with the second creation story in Genesis (2:7), where God the creator breathes life into the nostrils of the newly formed man to bring him to life. What Jesus is doing is giving the disciples their new life, giving them power and energy, enabling them to go out and speak of him to the world.

The account of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 gives a similar idea, even if the story is different. Here, the disciples (more than just the twelve) are together after Jesus has ascended into heaven. They are not locked away, but still they appear more focused on the internal order of the group, rather than on the world outside. The spirit arrives as wind and fire, and again, we might recall the first account of creation in Genesis (1:2), when the wind of God sweeps over the waters. The Spirit fills the disciples and gives them new energy, vigour and purpose. They begin to communicate not just with one another but with people from across the world, telling the world of God's power in Jesus Christ.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives**

As the lockdown is being slightly raised here in Scotland we need to pray for the Holy Spirit for our lives here in 2020. Some of you will remember that in the confirmation service, when our baptismal promises are repeated and we claim the Christian faith for ourselves as adults, we are invited to pray that we might “daily increase in the Holy Spirit, more and more”. We pray that the Holy Spirit will touch our lives every single day, and not just on one special occasion. We look for the Spirit to be the energy and power behind everything we do. This is not a selfish desire. The disciples in the locked room were given the Spirit in order to be sent out. The disciples in Jerusalem were given the Spirit so that they could communicate God’s purpose and the story of Jesus with the whole world. God gives this divine energy for a purpose.

The gift of the Spirit enables the Church to look beyond the Church. Left to our own devices, we might prefer, like those first disciples, to lock ourselves away, or stay only as a gathered community of believers. But Jesus calls us to share the good news of the kingdom, and for this we need God’s Spirit to give us energy and purpose and courage to speak. We do not pray for the Holy Spirit simply to have a warm glow of God in our own lives; we pray for the energy of God, so that we might go out, speak up and draw others to know Christ.

**“Receive the Holy Spirit.”** John 20:22

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God’ spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**