

Acts 2:1-21

²When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, 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. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

Pentecost is the “birthday of the Church.” It presents a seismic moment in the unfolding development of the Jesus movement. Meaning “the fiftieth day”, Pentecost signaled the time between Passover and a holy festival called the Feast of Weeks. The story of Pentecost echoes with symbols of theophany (God-appearances) in the fire and wind, lending the story to connections with God giving the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus. The Pentecost story also reverberates with the significance of language, suggesting connections to the story of Babel in Genesis. Finally, Pentecost sets up the trajectory of national, ethnic, gender, and age inclusion for the Church.

Big Idea

The Church does not get the Spirit. The Spirit gets a church.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. Describe a time when heard or saw something, and someone else interpreted it in a way quite different from you.
3. What was the basis of unity in this Pentecost story? How might that inform our understanding of unity today?
4. The Prophet Joel anticipates St. Paul who writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) What might the Spirit of God challenge us to add to this list of divisions that Christ transcends?
5. What does the Church today need to remember and hold dear about the Pentecost story to remain faithful, energized, and ready for the work of love?

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