

The Pentecost Season (Holy Spirit)

Pentecost or the Fiftieth Day marks the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the believers fifty days after the Resurrection of Jesus. As recorded in the Book of Acts chapter 2, it took place while the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish harvest festival, fifty days after the Passover. It signifies the empowerment of the church by the Holy Spirit and launched its mission to evangelize the world. This spiritual event is celebrated as the church's "birthday."

The presence of the Spirit of God in the church is manifested in the spiritual quality of its community life (Galatians 5:22–25), the unselfish sharing of gifts from the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) and in its zeal to witness to God's love in Jesus Christ. Technically, the liturgical color Red is used only for this particular Sunday.

Pentecost Sunday

The Birth of the Church**Old Testament: Genesis 11:1-9 (NRSV)**

The Tower of Babel

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.² And as they migrated from the east,³ they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' ⁵ The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. ⁶ And the LORD said, 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.⁷ Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' ⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

New Testament: Acts 2:1-13 (NRSV)

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³ But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

John 16:12-16 (NRSV)

¹² 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Sorrow will turn into joy ¹⁶ A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.'

General Concept: The ascension of Christ is the moment of descent of the Holy Spirit.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **God gave us the church.**

ME/OE: **The Spirit of Christ is in the church.**

Y: **When Christ went to heaven, he gave us the church.**

A: **The Spirit of Christ is in the Church in order to continue his mission.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Scholars generally believe that the writer of the Genesis 11: 1-9 was an attempt to explain the origin of the different languages/dialects throughout the world. This account however could be considered as pre-historic story. The writer (Yahwist) had conceived of a time when communication was easy and understandable as people were supposed to have originated with just one language in use. This perception of the Yahwist writer however appears to be contradicted by the previous chapter (Gen.10, coming from a later Priestly writer) which already presents the table and genealogies of various nations and races coming from the three sons of Noah (Ham, Shem, Japhet) with their respective distinctive languages and cultures. But we focus in the meantime on the text of Genesis 11. It was reported that Yahweh was not pleased to see the plan of the people to build a city and tower whose peak would reach the heavens. The people were hoping that with this massive building infrastructure they will be able to maintain their unity and thus prevent their being scattered in the world. This attempt at building a huge project has greatly disturbed Yahweh. It was as if humankind is now making an attempt to ensure their security on the basis of their own abilities alone and not on God's power to secure them. They would now even try to reach the very place of God in the heavens. Human ability and technology is now being used to actually replace God from God's place in the heavens. This could be the peak of what may be called hubris or human pride, a worship of the self that has become uncontrollable. This is the spirit that has also caused humanity's own fall and division: the failure to overcome love for self, to worship only one's own abilities and achievements and to delude oneself into thinking that the unity and security of humankind lies basically in the power of the human and not in the power of God. This ancient story actually has a very contemporary message.

The coming of the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost Event in Acts 2 may indicate also God's continuing attempt to pursue, unite and reconcile humankind to Godself. As shown in the life and ministry of Jesus and ultimately in his death on the cross, God has expressed the undying divine intention not to give up on humankind. The coming of the Holy Spirit provides the assurance that the very presence of Jesus, that same healing, forgiving, reassuring and uniting presence of Jesus will still be with those who will decide to listen and follow him. Just as the spirit of pride and of hubris have caused serious divisions and failure of humanity in various aspects, the Holy Spirit comes to the disciples as the very source of the spirit of selfless giving of themselves to the cause of Jesus' mission enabling them to bridge the gaps and overcome the barriers that divide peoples and nations. This is clearly demonstrated by the event of the Pentecost, when the coming of the Holy Spirit suddenly enabled the peoples who were there in Jerusalem, devout Jews on pilgrimage coming from other nations with their respective languages, to hear the disciples speaking in their respective native languages. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to bridge the language and cultural barriers and enabled them to preach the gospel in the languages of the peoples who were there. The gift of speaking in tongues is not actually meant to

separate the disciples from the rest of the people, to make them look so set apart and special. This gift was meant to contribute to the healing of divisions and separation of peoples and races. It is meant to contribute to the unity and reconciliation of all those who believe in God and are willing to follow Jesus' way. Just as the spirit of pride and self-centeredness led people to believe that they can achieve their own security by their own power and abilities, the Holy Spirit comes to them as a gentle reminder of the truth that will truly set them free from all insecurities, worries and anxieties of this world: that the way to real peace, security, reconciliation and unity is only through the way of Jesus, the way of humble servanthood reaching out, witnessing to Christ's good news to the very least and most marginalized of peoples even in their own respective languages.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

As Jesus ascended to heaven the Spirit descends to dwell in the church. This moment takes place on the day of Pentecost which marks the founding of the church. On this occasion the scattered disciples of Jesus gathered to receive the Spirit and formed into a community dedicated to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The church has two essential qualities. First, it is animated by the presence of the Spirit signifying the continuing companionship of Christ with his followers as he promised: "Behold, I am with you till the end of the ages" [Matthew 28:20b]. This is the assurance that despite the many challenges it is confronted with and the various powers seeking to destroy it by conquest or seduction or by its own tendencies, it would remain Christ's church. Second, the church binds the members into a community that is united in worship, fellowship and mission. The first day of the week, Sunday, is dedicated for gathering as a never-ending reminder that Jesus is the Lord of their daily life. At the breaking of the bread, they reenact the life, death and resurrection of the Lord as an act of renewing their unity with him and to continue his work.

In addition, the church seeks to realize Jesus' prayers that "all may be one" [John 17:21 a]. The spread of Christianity around the world has also led to the fragmentation of the one church of Jesus Christ into ecclesial communities, denominations and groups that maintain exclusive sacramental fellowship, ministry and mission work. The practice of mutual alienation bleeds the body of Christ and grieves the Spirit. As the Spirit leads creation towards its fulfillment in God, the Spirit also calls the church to widen the space for unity in worship, fellowship and witness in the world.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe the day of Pentecost as the coming of the Holy Spirit;
2. demonstrate appreciation for the coming of the Holy Spirit;
3. relate the birth of the church with the gathering of the believers and the coming of the Holy Spirit came; and
4. share what each one can do for the church.

II. Concept: God gave us the church.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), offering plate, emoticons for different feelings (happy, sad, surprised, afraid, angry, anxious), popsicle sticks activity sheets, paste or staple wires, a birthday cake

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God we thank you for bringing us to church for Sunday school. Teach us to love and appreciate our church and learn more about the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."
3. Opening song: "When the Spirit of the Lord Is in Our Heart"
*When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can sing like Mary sang (twice).
We can sing oh, Lord (twice). We can sing like Mary sang. (repeat this line)
When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can lead like Moses led (twice).
We can lead oh, Lord (twice). We can lead like Moses led. (repeat this line)
When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can pray like Daniel prayed (twice).
We can pray oh, Lord (twice). We can pray like Daniel prayed. (repeat this line)
When the Spirit of the Lord is in our heart, we can dance like Miriam danced (twice).
We can dance oh, Lord (twice). We can dance like Miriam danced. (repeat this line)*

B. Getting Ready

Provide each child six emoticons. Tell them to paste these emoticons in popsicle sticks. Let them describe each emoticon. Give situations and let them flash how they feel using the appropriate emoticon.

C. Learning Time

Prepare the children to listen to the story. Tell them to react to each part using their emoticons when they are asked to.

God Sends the Holy Spirit

(Based on Acts 2:1-13)

Jesus went back to his Father in heaven. He left the disciples on earth. (Show your feeling.) Before leaving, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples. The Holy Spirit will stay with them forever. (Show how do you feel about the promise. Show how you feel when waiting for someone or something. Some events may include birthdays or special celebrations.)

The disciples waited. After ten days of waiting, about 9:00 in the morning, something happened. (Count 1 to 10. Present time in the clock.) On that special day called Pentecost (which means 50), the Holy Spirit came! (Show your feeling.)

All of a sudden, there was a strong sound like a rushing wind. (Blow air into your hands and show how you feel. Make a loud sound using your mouth.) Each of the disciples was filled with the Holy Spirit. Tongues of fire came (Show your feeling.) These

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell how the Pentecost happened
2. relate the number 50 with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost
3. associate the coming of the Holy Spirit with the birth of the church
4. express one's appreciation of the coming of the Holy Spirit through creative activities.

II. Concept: The Spirit of Christ is in the church.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), offering plate, song chart, verse chart, crayons, white cartolina (or manila paper, craft paper, or any material that could be used for the Story Map Reading)

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: "Loving God who indwells the Church through the Spirit of Christ, continue to inspire us to study your word and grow in it. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen."
3. Opening song: "Come, Holy Spirit"
*Come, Holy Spirit, I need You, come, Holy Spirit, I pray;
Come with Your strength and Your power, come in Your own special way.*

B. Getting Ready

1. Unlock the meaning of the word "Pentecost" by giving the meaning of the prefix "pente" which means 50.
2. Let the class give occasions in the Bible that have the numbers: 7 (creation), 40 (ascension of Jesus, fasting of Jesus in the wilderness, duration of the Great Flood, years in the desert of the Israelites before entering the Promised Land), 50 (the coming of the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost, Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits, the Year of the Jubilee)

C. Learning Time

1. Instruct the class to read Acts 2:1-13 and John 16:12-16 in unison.
2. Divide the class into two groups. Tell each group to pretend that they were there during the Pentecost and do an investigatory work. Expected answers are as follows:
 - a. For Acts 2:1-13
 - 1) Before the Pentecost
Jesus ascended to heaven
Jesus' promise to the disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit
Where the disciples will wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit
What the Holy Spirit will do
 - 2) During the Pentecost
10-day wait after the ascension of Jesus
Sending of the Holy Spirit
Sound of a big rushing wind
Coming of the tongues of fire that did not burn and rested on each of the disciples
Filling of the disciples of the Holy Spirit
Speaking in different tongues as enabled by the Holy Spirit

- 3) Empowered by the Spirit
 - Many believed because of what they heard from the disciples in their own language
 - Peter's powerful message about Christ
 - Birth of the Church
 - New believers added to the church
 - The Church doing what God wants them to do through the intervention of the Holy Spirit
 - b. For John 16:12-16 (What the Holy Spirit will do upon his coming)
 - 1) Guide believers into all truth
 - 2) Will not speak of self but will point to Jesus
 - 3) Sorrow will turn into joy
 - 4) Seeing Jesus no more and seeing Jesus again
- D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time**
1. Tell each group to present their investigatory work creatively (by acting out, using a news report, doing artworks, jingles, or advertisements, sequencing the events)
 2. Process each presentation and encourage the learners to give their insights on the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 3. Teach the memory verse: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:12-14)
- E. Discovering the Biblical Truth**
- Ask: Whose Spirit is in the church? (The Spirit of Christ is in the church. It is God's work through the leading of the Holy Spirit that made it possible for the believers to spread the Good News in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria as mentioned in the Great Commission.)
- F. Applying the Biblical Truth**
- Ask the class to acknowledge the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Let the learners express a life that is pleasing to God. Here are some expected answers:
1. Reading God's Word before sleeping or upon waking up
 2. Finding time to meditate on God's word
 3. Finding ways of helping others
 4. Sharing one's talents in serving others
 5. Attending Sunday school regularly
 6. Sharing one's blessings to those in need
 7. Using kind words when talking with others
 8. Segregating wastes
 9. Caring for plants and animals
- G. Closing Worship**
1. Have the children recite the memory verse.
 2. Offering
 3. Closing song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)
 4. Closing prayer: "Merciful and glorious God, we acknowledge your love for us when you sent the Holy Spirit to us, to guide and sustain us. May the Holy Spirit help us always to do what is right in accordance to your will. May our lives be always pleasing to your sight. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen. "

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe the Day of Pentecost;
2. explain its significance and relate it with the declaration of Jesus before his ascension;
3. compare the relevance of the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit; and
4. express one's commitment to the church as one being given by Christ

II. Concept: When Christ went to heaven, he gave us the church.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Loving God, we thank you for sending your Spirit. We thank you for Pentecost that marks the beginning of the Church. Make us grateful in appreciating each one's presence as sisters and brothers united in your love. This is our prayer in your Son's name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)

B. Getting Ready

1. Present a lock and a key to the class. Let them say something about the two objects. Let them open and close the lock and see how the key does its work in doing its job. Encourage the learners to share their experience at home or in school when they made use of the given objects.
2. Relate the lock as the mission field of the believers and the key with the Great Commission left by Jesus before he ascended to heaven. Emphasize the enormity of the job and at the same the power given to the disciples to be up to the job.

C. Learning Time

1. Instruct the learners to read in unison the verses in Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:1-13.
2. Let them compare and contrast the following:
 - a. The confusion effect of the use of different languages to the builders of the Tower of Babel
 - b. The conversion effect of many people upon hearing the Good News in their own language as enabled by the Holy Spirit.
3. Ask several learners to sequence the events surrounding the Pentecost and relate these events to the birth of the church. Expected answers will include the following:
 - a. 10-day wait after the ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit
 - b. Physical happenings in the environment (Sound of a big rushing wind and the coming of the tongues of fire that did not burn and rested on each of the disciples
 - c. Enabling the disciples by the Holy Spirit to use the language of the different people
 - d. Many believed because of what they heard from the disciples in their own language especially Peter's powerful message about Christ
 - e. The birth of the Church and the new believers added to the church

- f. The Church doing what God wants them to do through the intervention of the Holy Spirit
4. Ask the class to read responsively John 16:12-16. Then discuss the following highlights:
 - a. The Holy Spirit will guide the believers into all truth.
 - b. The Holy Spirit will speak not of his own but will point to Jesus.
 - c. The sorrow of the believers will turn into joy.
 - d. Jesus will no longer be seen by his believers upon his ascension but will see him again on his Second Coming.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Discuss the story and ask these questions:

1. What is the significance of the Pentecost event to our lives as Christians?
2. What kind of life is pleasing to God?
3. How will you know if the Holy Spirit is in your life?
4. Why is it important to commit our lives, talents, and treasures to the church?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: When did Christ give us the church? (When Christ went to heaven he gave us the church.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Go back to the lock and key activity done earlier. Let the learners relate this to how they can be involved in the mission plan of the church using the Great Commission as the key to their work.
2. Tell the learners to list their personal plans to live a life pleasing to God.
3. Discuss the memory verse: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:12-14)

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)
3. Closing prayer: "Compassionate God, we thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be our guide and to sustain us to a life that is pleasing to you. May the Holy Spirit continually be with us in the use of the spiritual gifts to serve others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. illustrate graphically the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit;
2. associate the coming of the Holy Spirit and her presence in the church;
3. conclude that mission is made possible through the Spirit of Christ; and
4. demonstrate one's gratitude over the birth of the church and make corresponding commitments.

II. Concept: The Spirit of Christ is in the Church in order to continue God's mission.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), worksheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome Time
2. Opening Prayer (Assigned Leader)
3. Opening Hymn "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" HFJ# 181

B. Getting Ready

1. Translate the following expressions into different local languages (make sure the language is different from what is used in the locality).
 - a. Thank you.
 - b. How are you?
 - c. I'm glad to meet you.
 - d. May I help you?
 - e. Let's pray.
 - f. Goodbye!
2. As you read the expressions, find out how the learners react.

C. Learning Time

1. Instruct the class to read the references and present this outline to guide them in understanding the texts.
 - a. Genesis 11:1-9
 - 1) *Verses 1-4:* The people who wanted to build the tower unify themselves for their self interest and own glory.
 - 2) *Verses 5-9:* God scatters them by confusing them as they spoke in different languages; thus not being able to finish the job
 - b. Acts 2:1-13
 - 1) *Verses 1-4:* The sounds, the tongues of fire, and the speaking in different languages
 - 2) *Verses 5-13:* Many believed as they heard the Good News from the disciples. The church has been born and the new believers were added to the church.
 - c. John 16:12-16: The Holy Spirit will come to guide the believers and champion Jesus Christ.
2. Relate the confusion of the builders of the Tower of Babel caused by their use of different languages and the conversion of believers by being able to listen to their own language spoken by the disciples as enabled by the Holy Spirit. Go back to the activity earlier and draw from the class the significance of understanding of what is being said using a language that they use.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Tell the class to give the significance of the birth of the church with the coming of the Holy Spirit.
2. Present and discuss the two qualities of the church as described in the Companion Guide.
 - a. The church 'is animated by the presence of the Spirit signifying the continuing companionship of Christ with his followers as he promised: "Behold, I am with you till the end of the ages" [Matthew 28:20b]. This is the assurance that despite the many challenges it is confronted with and the various powers seeking to destroy it by conquest or seduction or by its own tendencies, it would remain Christ's church.'
 - b. 'The church binds the members into a community that is united in worship, fellowship and mission. In addition, the church seeks to realize Jesus' prayers that "all may be one" [John 17:21 a]. The spread of Christianity around the world has also led to the fragmentation of the one church of Jesus Christ into ecclesial communities, denominations and groups that maintain exclusive sacramental fellowship, ministry and mission work. The practice of mutual alienation bleeds the body of Christ and grieves the Spirit. As the Spirit leads creation towards its fulfillment in God, the Spirit also calls the church to widen the space for unity in worship, fellowship and witness in the world.'

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Why is the Spirit of Christ in the church?" (The Spirit of Christ is in the Church in order to continue his mission.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Discuss the significance of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the role of the church in fulfilling the mandate of proclaiming the truth and the coming of the Holy Spirit to start a new life in Christ Jesus.
2. Group the class into dyads. Let each group name ways by which they can help the church in its plans in spreading the Gospel of Truth.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "Spirit of God, Descend upon my Heart" (HFJ # 181)
3. Closing prayer: "Compassionate God, we thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be our guide and to sustain us to a life that is pleasing to you. May the Holy Spirit continually be with us in the use of the spiritual gifts to serve others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."