

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

The Day of Pentecost
May 11, 2008

Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Receive the Holy Spirit

*Breathe on me breath of God;
Fill me with life anew ...*
(Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889)

Like a “breath of fresh air,” this week’s Scripture texts remind us of our source of life – that which sustains and renews us. Words like “mighty wind,” “breath,” and “Holy Spirit” punctuate the pericopes. And they call to mind Genesis 1:2, where we read that “the Spirit of God [or a mighty wind] was moving over the water,” and Genesis 2:7, where it is recorded that “God breathed life into the man” (CEV). As noted in the words above from a hymn written by Edwin Hatch, God supplies us with the breath of life. Psalm 104, a beautiful hymn in praise of creation, includes these words:

*Our LORD, by your wisdom you made so many things;
The whole earth is covered with your living creatures.*

...

*You created all of them by your Spirit,
and you give new life to the earth.*
(verses 24, 30, CEV)

New life in the Spirit is God’s promise to us. On this Day of Pentecost, our Gospel text transports us back fifty days to the day of Christ’s Resurrection. It is evening; the disciples are locked behind closed doors. Suddenly, Jesus is in their midst! His post-resurrection appearance catches them off guard. After the disciples determine that their Lord is indeed risen and is with them in the flesh, Jesus breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

The disciples receive that which Jesus promised in his final discourse with them prior to his arrest and crucifixion – the Spirit of truth who will guide them into the full truth, teach them everything, help them, and who will keep on living in them (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:13). Filled with the Spirit, the disciples are now equipped to carry out Jesus’ mission – to forgive sins (John 20:23) and tell all people of every nation to turn to God (Luke 24:47). Jesus tells his followers, “I am sending you, just as the Father has

sent me” (John 20:21b, *CEV*), words that recall Jesus’ prayer for his followers on the night of his betrayal: “I am sending them into the world, just as you sent me” (John 17:18, *CEV*).

On this Day of Pentecost, the text from Acts records the event that takes place ten days after Christ’s ascension into heaven. The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus before he ascended (Acts 1:8), has come like “a mighty wind” and as “fiery tongues” on the expectant disciples (Acts 2:2, 3, *CEV*). Today, we, as twenty-first century witnesses to the gospel, are also recipients of God’s Holy Spirit, this life-giving breath of God.

Sometimes those who receive God’s Spirit are described as being “on fire” for the Lord! Yes, as “Pentecost” people, we should be “on fire” because God’s Spirit continues to live in us. Jesus’ words to his disciples are now his words to us. We have received the breath of God, and, like the disciples, we are sent to tell everyone the good news about Jesus. As the Church, Christ’s body on earth, we continue to be “led by God’s Spirit” to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3, *CEV*). Receive the Holy Spirit!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Moldova – With thanks to God for the way the churches are working together and for the willingness of public libraries to stock biblical literature, and with prayers for new translation projects, the ability to reach many poor and marginalized people with the Word of God, for strengthening ties with all churches, and for wisdom and vision in carrying out Bible work efficiently; **Ukraine –** With thanks for God’s guidance, for people’s interest in God’s Word, for church support for Bible work, and for opportunities to reach more people with the Gospel, and with prayers for the new translation team, for Bible Day celebrations, for work among blind children, and for the construction of Bible House in Kiev.

Activity Corner: Pentecost “Wind Socks”

Supplies needed: Bible; red and yellow construction paper (8-1/2” x 11”); strips (about 1” wide) of red and white crepe paper (approximately 15” long); stapler; scotch tape; scissors; hole puncher; yarn or string; glue or paste; glitter or stickers (optional).

Cut four or six strips of crepe paper (2 or 3 red, 2 or 3 white) and tape or paste them along the bottom of the 11” side of a sheet of construction paper, alternating the red and the white strips. On the reverse side, decorate the sheet with “tongues of fire” made from yellow construction paper and with glitter or stickers. Roll the sheet and staple or tape the ends together. Punch two holes at the top and add string. Hang the wind sock outside (weather permitting) or hang it in a window as a reminder of God’s sending the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Conclude by reading together Acts 2:1-4. At the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond together, “COME HOLY SPIRIT!” Sing “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” or “I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing,” or one of your favorite hymns that celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit.

