

PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Trinity
First Sunday after Pentecost
June 3, 2007

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31
Psalm 8
Romans 5:1-5
John 16:12-15

The Spirit of Truth

Within the four verses of this week's reading from John's Gospel, Jesus delivers the fifth and final promise concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, the bringer of truth, will speak truth and lead Christ's followers in truth. Previously Jesus promised the disciples that the Spirit would always be with them and show them what is true (14:16-17), take Jesus' place and remind them of what Jesus had said while he was with them (14:26), help them to tell others about Jesus (15:26-27), and show the world's people the truth about sin, God's justice, and judgment (16:8-11).

In his final discourse with his disciples prior to his death, Jesus prepares them for their life after he returns to God. Aware that the disciples cannot comprehend fully all that he wants to tell them, Jesus assures his followers with the promise that the Spirit of truth will guide them into truth. Once empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples will be led by the Spirit of truth. The Spirit will ensure the continuation of Jesus' ministry beyond an historical point in time. Post-resurrection/ascension communities of faith will make God's love known, as revealed in Jesus, the Word Incarnate.

Earlier in the discourse, Jesus speaks of those who reject truth – those who reject his words and works (15:22-24). In rejecting the truth, they reject that which can set them free (8:32) and deny themselves access to the liberating, life-giving love that Jesus offers (10:10).

In this week's Old Testament lesson from Proverbs, Wisdom calls out to all who will hear (8:4). Wisdom states, "What I say is the truth" (8:7, *GNT*). Those who fail to listen to Wisdom's words deny themselves the opportunity to learn and grow in faith. In 1 Corinthians 1:24, Christ is described as the "wisdom of God" (*GNT*). In Christ Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, *GNT*).

The Holy Spirit has come! The Spirit appeared as tongues of fire on Pentecost and came to dwell in and among those first-century believers. That same Spirit now lives within us, speaking to us and guiding us into truth. Having been so blessed, we are called to continue the mission for which Jesus himself has prepared us. As twenty-first century

followers of Christ, we are his witnesses (Acts 1:8). With boldness, let us engage in the ministry Christ has entrusted to us and proclaim his message “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, *GNT*). This is the mission that expresses the unity of God, Jesus, and the Spirit – our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

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: Belarus –

With prayers for funds to implement children’s projects so that children can be taught about God early in life, with prayers for the many Belarussians still suffering after the Chernobyl contamination or 20 years ago and who need God’s Word of hope, and with prayers for the ability to bring peace to the elderly by providing them with Scriptures;

Lithuania – With thanks to God for the ability to bring the Good News to orphanages and for encouraging children with the Scriptures;

Latvia – With thanks to God for increased Bible distribution, and with prayers for God’s guidance in launching a new translation of the New Testament in modern Latvian; **Estonia** – With prayers for funding to continue translating the Old Testament into modern Estonian, and with prayers for God’s continued blessing on the translation of Mark’s Gospel into Estonian Sign Language.

Activity Corner: “Spirit of Truth” Cards

Supplies needed: Bible; index cards (3” x 5”) or writing paper; pens or pencils; drawing paper and crayons for younger children.

Read together Psalm 8, Proverbs 8:22-31, and Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a. Discuss how creation is described in each of these three readings. What do all three Scripture passages have in common? How would you describe what is “truth” in these three passages? Encourage younger children to draw pictures of what is described in any of these three passages.

Distribute index cards or pieces of paper to each member of your household. On one side of the card write “Spirit of Truth.” Encourage each one to think about a situation or decision they may be wrestling with and to write it on the reverse side of the card (or paper). Ask them to keep the card as a reminder to pray about the situation throughout the week, asking God for the spirit of discernment. Conclude with prayer and by singing “Breathe on Me, Breath of God,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” or one of your favorite hymns.