

# PENTECOST

## A CONSPIRACY OF LOVE

Our lives are a conspiracy of love. *Con-spriacy* means “breathing together.” From the moment that the “Breath of God” first gives life to our body (Gen 2:7), we start a lifetime of breathing together with God. Pentecost celebrates God’s new life transforming us—a change that demands leaving behind old ways and adopting God’s ways—a new vision of the world, new values and new behaviors.

The outward signs of the first Pentecost experience—wind and fire (Acts 2:2-4)—are tokens of transformation. The wind blows where it wills, always fluctuating and changing independently of our control. Fire never leaves anything it touches the same. Like God’s transforming power, wind and fire are safe in small doses, but dangerous, uncontrolled, and even devastating when experienced at full power.

### God’s Holy Breath: Mystery and Mission

The reality of the Holy Spirit, the divine power of life and the bond of love, is a theological mystery. That is, although we affirm *that* the Father and the Son share the same Holy Spirit or “Breath” of divine life that draws

them together into a communion of love, we cannot explain how this happens.

The Holy Spirit is our way of experiencing how God dwells deep within us to empower us for living and to draw us together into a community through the power of love. Breath is the sign of life—we can’t do without it—and vigorous breathing is a sign of vital power at work. When we detect the Holy Spirit, we know that God is somehow present and working.

God’s Holy Breath always accompanies God’s Word. Just as we cannot speak words without using breath, so likewise when God sends the Word, God also sends the Holy Spirit (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #689). God’s Holy Spirit empowers us to hear and understand God’s Word, then to act on it in our lives.

Filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples responded by their public witness to the Christian message and their community life of worship and solidarity. From that time onward, the Christian community has continued to proclaim the meaning of Jesus’ saving work and to invite all humanity to believe and to share in the life of God.



# THE SPIRIT AT WORK IN US

The disciples' transformation was based on their astounding experience of first meeting the risen Christ and then being empowered by God's Holy Spirit. Through baptism, the Holy Spirit also now dwells in us and transforms us from within into living images of God and Christ (Gen 1:26-27; 2 Cor 3:18). We are reminded of this transforming power when we imagine the Holy Spirit as fire. "As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1127). So whenever the fire of the Holy Spirit touches us, we cannot but be changed.

But unlike regular fire which usually destroys things, God's transforming fire changes us into something better. We become images of Christ by taking on the mind of Christ, his attitudes, his values and his behaviors to continue his mission of building God's covenant community of justice, love and peace on earth.

The Holy Spirit is always at work empowering us for new life in Christ and bonding us into the Christian community. This work is done through the theological gifts of faith, hope and charity that help us to live in right relationship with God and others, through the celebration of the sacraments that bond us into Christ and his community, and finally through particular personal gifts given to us as individuals to use to help build up the community (1 Cor 12:4-11). As the Holy Spirit works within us to help us put on the mind of Christ and live according to his gospel values, we become more receptive to the Holy Spirit's guidance and more eager to follow where the Spirit leads us.

- *Where and how have I recently experienced the promptings of the Holy Spirit in my life?*
- *How have I most experienced the Holy Spirit drawing me into a deeper relationship with God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit?*
- *What gifts has the Holy Spirit given to me for building up the Christian community and how have I used them?*



When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. —*Acts 2:1-4*

## *Come Holy Spirit*

*Veni Sancte Spiritus*, ("Come Holy Spirit") is the Sequence Prayer before the Gospel in the Mass for Pentecost. Originally an ancient Latin hymn, it reminds us that whenever we pray, we should call upon God and Jesus to send us their Holy Spirit, the bond of love between them, to join us to them and to empower us for a life of witness and service leading to a life with God that will never end.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!

Come, Father of the poor!  
Come, source of all our store!  
Come, within our bosoms shine.

You, of comforters the best;  
You, the soul's most welcome guest;  
Sweet refreshment here below;

In our labor, rest most sweet;  
Grateful coolness in the heat;  
Solace in the midst of woe.

O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of yours,  
And our inmost being fill!

Where you are not, we have naught,  
Nothing good in deed or thought,  
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour your dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away:

Bend the stubborn heart and will;  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;  
Guide the steps that go astray.

On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore  
In your sevenfold gift descend;

Give them virtue's sure reward;  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end.

*Amen. Alleluia.*