

Holy Communion for Pentecost

This is a spoken, self-standing service. You can read it alone, aloud or silently, as you wish. If there is someone with you where you are, you might like for one of you to be the leader, with others reading the responses in bold type. It is a good idea to sit quietly for few moments to settle your mind before you start, and you might like to light a candle to help you focus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let anyone who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water. Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were yet to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. *John 7.37-39*

Prayer of preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Penitence

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Against you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight. Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Create in me a pure heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire, strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

New Testament Reading: Acts 2.1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

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

But 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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Gospel reading: John 20.19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Reflection

The late Terry Pratchett, in his wonderful book "The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy," wrote about the babel fish, which he said was probably the oddest creature in the whole Universe. If you put a babel fish in your ear, it enabled you understand anything that anyone said in any language of the galaxy. At this Pentecost festival in Jerusalem, it seems that the disciples experienced a reverse babel fish phenomenon: they were enabled to speak the languages of 15 (count them!) different nations. But if you read the passage carefully, you see that all these foreigners had a babel fish experience too. Because they said *to each other* that they could hear the disciples in all their own languages: so they must have understood each other as they said this.

Some commentators suggest the story harks back to the account in Genesis 11.9, when God threw down the Tower of Babel and confused the language of humans. (Which is probably why Mr Pratchett called his creature the babel fish.) So at one level, the story is about how God makes it possible for people to communicate freely, and to receive what the disciples say about God and Christ, without being obstructed by cultural or national barriers, if they choose to listen. Which is often a big "if", of course.

There are important symbols of God's presence in this story. We read of a powerful rushing wind. In the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament, there is one word which means breath or wind or spirit. In Hebrew it is "ruach" – the "-ch" is pronounced as in the Scots word loch. In Greek it is "pneuma". In Ezekiel 37, God has the four winds breathe life into the lifeless bodies of the Israelites. In John 3, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is like the wind, which blows where it pleases. In today's Gospel reading, the risen Jesus breathes the

Holy Spirit into the disciples. Tongues of flame were seen on the disciples' heads. In the Old Testament, fire is often used to signify purification. For example, in Malachi 3, God's messenger is said to be like a refiner's fire who will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. It is all the same idea – that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of life itself, life renewed and purified. But for what purpose?

Many people, probably the majority in our country at least, seem to manage their lives as well as they want to without any reference to faith of any kind. Lots of these people are charitable, hospitable, kindly people who are a credit to themselves and a blessing to others around them. But "doing God" is just not their thing. For many believers, though, who think of themselves as "doing God", God is one of many things they do. Sometimes, usually but not always on Sundays, they "do God". At other times they do the shopping or the garden, or the housework, or sport or music or a host of other things, and they don't think of those things as godly in any sense. A message, and it is a difficult message, of Pentecost, is that we must try to make God not just one of the things we do, but the centre of everything we do. We must try to absorb the Spirit which God breathes into us, so that it becomes the ground and purpose of what we do, not just another one of the things we think about sometimes. It is a tough assignment, but it gets easier with practice. It is about being prayerful in everything we do.

This works differently for different people, so a few examples might help. Working in my garden, I should try to be conscious of being involved in God's ongoing maintenance of creation. I should try to bring godly principles to bear when I am shopping, buying what I need but not being greedy. I should be grateful for the contribution of every one who grew the food, brought it to the shop, and those who work in the shop to make it available to me. (Which is something especially brought home to us in this time of lockdown.) I should remember the needs of less fortunate people, perhaps putting a few things into the foodbank box. When I'm listening to music, or looking at art, or the television, or reading books, I should be grateful for the people who make these things possible - technicians and writers and performers - and for the enrichment that these things add to my experience of life. And try to think of ways in which I might enrich the lives of other people.

As St Paul said, whatever we do, we should do it as if we are doing it for God. And if I find myself doing something which doesn't feel like what God would want me to be doing for him: well, that's a sign that I probably ought not to be doing that thing at all.

The Creed

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in earth and heaven is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intercessions.

Say your own prayers for people who need God's comfort, for all who suffer in any way, and for yourself. You can use these prayers if you like.

God of love, whose compassion never fails; we bring before you the griefs and perils of peoples and nations; the necessities of the homeless; the helplessness of the aged and weak; the sighings of prisoners; the pains of the sick and injured; the sorrow of the bereaved. Comfort and relieve them, O merciful Father, according to their needs,

for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Almighty God, by your mercy do not let our minds be cast down by any troubles of this life, let no hurtful temptation have dominion over them, let no darkness of unbelief hold them captive. But, illuminated by the light of your face shining on us, may we always walk securely on the sure ground of the true faith. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. **Amen.**

Act of Contrition

I love you, Jesus, my love above all things, and I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again, grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

Act of Spiritual Reception

O loving God, in union with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Eucharist, hearing your holy Word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood of your dear Son, I offer you praise and thanksgiving. Even though I am exiled from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Life I pray that you will unite me with all the baptised and with your Son who gave his life for us.

Come Lord Jesus, dwell in me and send your Holy Spirit that I may be filled with your presence.

Jesus, as the hem of your garment, touched in faith, healed the woman who could not touch your body, so may the soul of your servant be healed, for though I cannot receive you in the sacrament I can, through this offering of my prayer, receive you in my heart; grant this for Christ's sake. **Amen.**

O Lord and heavenly Father, we your humble servants entirely desire your fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching you to grant, that by the merits and death of your Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all your whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. **Amen.**

Conclusion

The Spirit of truth lead us into all truth, give us grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and strengthen us to proclaim the word and works of God. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

With the risen life of Christ within us, we go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, Alleluia. **Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia.**