

Images from the Word that speak of the Holy Spirit

- a powerful wind
- tongues of fire
- words in our mouth
- renewing the earth
- giver of every good gift
- our Advocate
- the one who lead us into the fullness of truth

The Liturgical Colour is red. It symbolises the intense love and 'fire' of the Holy Spirit. Other symbols of the Spirit are water, tongues of flame, white and a white dove. Each of these have scriptural connotations. Each seek to convey something of the mystery of the Spirit of God which is beyond human depiction.

Spirit of truth
whom the world can never grasp
touch our hearts
with the shock of your coming;
fill us with desire
for your disturbing peace
and fire us with longing
to speak your uncontainable word
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

All Desires Known - Janet Morley

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Pentecost



Pentecost Sunday is both an end and a beginning. Pentecost is the end of the Easter season and marks a transition to the season after Pentecost often referred to as Ordinary Time. The biblical roots of Pentecost are found in Acts 2:1-47 which appropriately ends with a description of the post-Pentecost community worshipping in Jerusalem.

On the day of Pentecost, according to Luke-Acts, the Spirit who had been promised to the disciples now came to endow the apostolic community with understanding and

empowerment. With new boldness and understanding the disciples proclaimed Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

Pentecost is a Greek word meaning “the fiftieth day.”

It is used in the New Testament (*see Acts 2:1; 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8*) to designate the **Hebrew harvest festival** (*Exodus 23:16*) or the feast of Weeks (*Exodus 34:22*). This festival took place seven weeks after Passover (*Deut.16:10; Leviticus 23:15-16*), that is, “the fiftieth day.”

Only in the late 4th century did Pentecost come into the Christian calendar in commemoration of the sending of the Holy Spirit. At the turn of third century, Tertullian designated the entire fifty days of Easter as making up a Pentecost. Similar language is also found in the writing of Athanasius as he refers to these days as “*the days of the holy Pentecost,*” reminding the faithful to add to the paschal feast “*one after the other, the seven holy weeks of Pentecost*” for the light of Easter “*extends its beams with unobscured grace, to all the seven weeks of the holy Pentecost.*” As late as 375, Basil can still speak of “all Pentecost” or “the seven weeks of holy Pentecost.”

Patrick Regan: “*The Fifty Days symbolize the era in which, by the release of the Spirit, this one true feast, Christ, is inserted into the present world to be shared by all who believe the Good News*”

Eusebius of Caesarea writing after the death of Constantine in 337 recalls the baptism of the Emperor, noting that “*all these events occurred during the most important festival, I mean that august and holy solemnity of Pentecost, which is distinguished by a period of seven weeks, and sealed with that one day on which the holy Scriptures attest the ascension of our*

common Saviour into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit among men”. The fiftieth day seems to celebrate both the Ascension and the giving of the Spirit.

The same practice was observed in Jerusalem according to Egeria. Egeria tells of how the people gather at nine o'clock for reading from Acts 2. After lunch, they walk to Eleona (*the Mount of Olives*) where they hear from the account of the Lord's ascension from both the Gospel and the Book of Acts. Between the time of Egeria's visit (383) and the compilation of the Armenian lectionary (415-439), the celebration of the ascension had been eliminated from the fiftieth day. The Armenian lectionary lists Acts 2:1-21 and John 16:5b-15 as the readings for the fiftieth day thus focusing entirely on the gift of the Spirit.

The Council of Constantinople confesses the full divinity of the Holy Spirit in 381. From this point on, Pentecost was no longer understood as the entire 50 days of Easter, but the day that celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Augustine discovers yet another dimension of Pentecost as the fiftieth day. He recalls that in the Old Testament there was fifty days between the killing of the Passover lamb and the giving of the law at Sinai. He notes the parallel with the New Testament where the Pascha is celebrated and after fifty days the giving of the Gospel by the Spirit.

Pentecost became a baptismal day for those prevented by illness from being baptized at the Easter Vigil. Leo justified this practice on the basis of the equality between the Son and the Spirit.