

# Feast of Pentecost 2020

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## Words of welcome

Today is the feast of Pentecost, and we give thanks to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, given to enrich and enable lives which have been open to receive God's love and grace. We pray today for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit in our church, our community and our world

## Introduction

Jesus Christ, whom we worship, is our crucified, risen and ascended Lord and we have walked with him through his journey of love.

We have faced the agony of his suffering and death on a cross.

We have rejoiced at his bursting free from the bonds of death.

We have enjoyed his risen presence with us and his revelation of himself through the breaking of bread.

We have seen his return to the throne before which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that this Jesus is Lord. And now, with the followers of his own time, we await the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, his gift to his people, through whom we make Christ known to the world.

## Opening Responsory

As we wait in silence,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we listen to your word,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we worship you in majesty,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we long for your refreshing,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we long for your renewing,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we long for your equipping,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

As we long for your empowering,  
**fill us with your Spirit.**

## Today's 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.**

## A reading from John's gospel

<sup>19</sup>It was evening on 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.'<sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'<sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

For the word of God in scripture  
For the word of God among us  
For the word of God within us  
We give thanks

## Reflection

Today, on this Feast of Pentecost, we find the disciples in their own particular lockdown. Locked down physically and mentally. Fear had made them hide away. They had seen their friend and teacher tortured and killed but now Jesus stands among them and the first word he says is 'Peace'. He goes on to say that he is sending them out - that they cannot remain behind locked doors for ever. As we think about coming out of lockdown, we might ponder how the world will change and how we've changed. We too, like those first disciples, may be fearful. I wonder what words we would like to hear from God today - it may well be the same words that Jesus spoke to those frightened disciples "Peace be with you"

Jesus repeats that phrase again in this short passage. He repeats it for a third time a week later, this time with Thomas present in verse 26, which we didn't hear today. It's as if Jesus is reaffirming how vital a sense of peace is. Peace, shalom, is the very nature of the triune God. It's not a peace in a political or economic sense - as we know, the disciples will go on to face persecution and hardship. The peace of the Father and Son is the peace of forgiveness and wholeness. It's a peace we offer to others by being their servant, as Christ was the servant of all. It's a peace that enables us to cope with our own personal lockdown moments - either today or in the future.

Today, as we hear of Jesus breathing on those first followers and saying "Receive the Holy Spirit" we rejoice that God breathes on us. We are reminded of the connection with the second creation story in Genesis Chapter 2, where God breathes life into the nostrils of the newly formed Adam to bring him to life. Jesus does the same, giving the

disciples their new life, and enabling them to come out of lockdown and speak of him to the world.

One of my favourite Ascension hymns is, for me, a hymn for Pentecost too, and some of the verses are these:

***Our blest Redeemer ere he breathed his tender last farewell  
a guide, a comforter bequeathed, with us to dwell.***

***And his that gentle voice we hear, soft as the breath of even,  
that checks each fault, that calms each fear, and speaks of heaven***

God comes to us in gentleness, as Jesus came to those first disciples when fear froze them into inaction. Because that's what fear does, it freezes us - it makes us say "I can't do that" or "I don't know what to do" - and so we usually end up doing nothing, locking ourselves away.

We too need God's peace before we can receive God's Spirit.  
A peace that drives out all fear.

***And his that gentle voice we hear, soft as the breath of even,  
that checks each fault, that calms each fear, and speaks of heaven***

May all of us know the peace of God today,  
and may God's Holy Spirit equip us to be the church.  
Amen.

## Prayers

God of power,  
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,  
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,  
may the gifts of your Spirit  
be our goal and our strength,  
now and always. Amen.

Let us pray to God,  
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,  
through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,  
and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,  
that through their skill and insights  
many will be restored to health:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the vulnerable and the fearful,  
for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort and peace:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We remember those known to us who are ill, especially John Meager and baby Alma.

We remember the family and friends of Trudy and Barclay Patoir, residents of Ashley House,  
who died this week, aged 99 and 100, after 75 years of marriage.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

**Merciful Father,  
accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who 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.**

## **Conclusion and Blessing**

The Lord is here.

**His Spirit is with us.**

Today we have remembered the coming of God's power on the disciples and we invite  
that same Spirit to drive us out into the wild places of the world.

May the Spirit,  
who hovered over the waters when the world was created,  
breathe into us the life he gives.  
May the Spirit,  
who overshadowed the Virgin when the eternal Son came among us,  
make us joyful in the service of the Lord.

May the Spirit,  
who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost,  
bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ.

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
be among us and remain with us always.

**Amen.**

Filled with the Spirit's power,  
let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Alleluia, Alleluia  
**Thanks be to God. Alleluia, Alleluia**

## Hymn

### **Come down, O love Divine**

Come down, O love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till he become the place  
where in the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.