

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

The Day of Pentecost: Whitsunday
June 12, 2011

Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21
John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

Receive the Holy Spirit

*Breathe on me breath of God;
Fill me with life anew ...*
(Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889)

Like a “breath of fresh air,” this week’s Scripture texts remind us of our source of life – that which sustains and renews us. Words like “mighty wind,” “breath,” and “Holy Spirit” punctuate the pericopes. And they call to mind Genesis 1:2, where we read that “the Spirit of God [or a mighty wind] was moving over the water,” and Genesis 2:7, where it is recorded that “God breathed life into the man” (*CEV*). As noted in the words above from a hymn written by Edwin Hatch, God supplies us with the breath of life. Psalm 104, a beautiful hymn in praise of creation, includes these words:

*Our LORD, by your wisdom you made so many things;
The whole earth is covered with your living creatures.*
...
*You created all of them by your Spirit,
and you give new life to the earth.*
(verses 24, 30, *CEV*)

New life in the Spirit is God’s promise to us. On this Day of Pentecost, our Gospel text transports us back fifty days to the day of Christ’s Resurrection. It is evening; the disciples are locked behind closed doors. Suddenly, Jesus is in their midst! His post-resurrection appearance catches them off guard. After the disciples determine that their Lord is indeed risen and is with them in the flesh, Jesus breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

The disciples receive that which Jesus promised in his final discourse with them prior to his arrest and crucifixion – the Spirit of truth who will guide them into the full truth, teach them everything, help them, and who will keep on living in them (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:13). Filled with the Spirit, the disciples are now equipped to carry out Jesus’ mission – to forgive sins (John 20:23) and tell all people of every nation to turn to God (Luke 24:47). Jesus tells his followers, “I am sending you, just as the Father has

sent me” (John 20:21b, *CEV*), words that recall Jesus’ prayer for his followers on the night of his betrayal: “I am sending them into the world, just as you sent me” (John 17:18, *CEV*).

On this Day of Pentecost, the text from Acts records the event that takes place ten days after Christ’s ascension into heaven. The Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus before he ascended (Acts 1:8), has come like “a mighty wind” and as “fiery tongues” on the expectant disciples (Acts 2:2, 3, *CEV*). Today, we, as twenty-first century witnesses to the Gospel, are also recipients of God’s Holy Spirit, this life-giving breath of God.

Sometimes those who receive God’s Spirit are described as being “on fire” for the Lord! Yes, as “Pentecost” people, we should be “on fire” because God’s Spirit continues to live in us. Jesus’ words to his disciples are now his words to us. We have received the breath of God, and, like the disciples, we are sent to tell everyone the Good News about Jesus. As the Church, Christ’s body on earth, we continue to be “led by God’s Spirit” to proclaim that “Jesus is Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:3, *CEV*). Receive the Holy Spirit!

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel who served, until her retirement, on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship. Barbara continues as a consultant to ABS.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: New Zealand – with thanks to God for the thousands who participated in the *E100* Bible reading challenge in 2010; and with prayers for the new Bible translation into Maori, for the launch of the reformatted 1952 Maori Bible, and for the special Bible being produced for prisoners, featuring prisoners’ artwork; also pray for opportunities for Christian outreach during the Rugby World Cup and for the Scripture resources being produced; **South Pacific** – with thanks to God for the wide range of translation projects, from Bible comics to in-depth Bible study tools, for both small and large communities; and with prayers for the smooth coordination of these projects so that they can produce good quality Scriptures on schedule; also pray for God to bless the Dayspring Yacht Ministry, through which people on remote islands such as Niue, Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna are reached; **Papua New Guinea** – with thanks to God for the prison literacy program which has blessed the lives of many inmates, and for all other projects; and with prayers that God will continue to equip the Society for great work; also pray for the *FCBH* program and all the translation work the Society and its partners are involved in to provide Scriptures in the 800-plus languages in Papua New Guinea, and for direction in developing a strategic plan for future operations.

Activity Corner: Pentecost “Wind Socks”

Supplies needed: Bible; red and yellow construction paper (8-1/2” x 11”); strips (about 1” wide) of red and white crepe paper (approximately 15” long); stapler; scotch tape; scissors; hole puncher; yarn or string; glue or paste; glitter or stickers (optional).

Cut four or six strips of crepe paper (2 or 3 red, 2 or 3 white) and tape or paste them along the bottom of the 11" side of a sheet of construction paper, alternating the red and the white strips. On the reverse side, decorate the sheet with "tongues of fire" made from yellow construction paper and with glitter or stickers. Roll the sheet and staple or tape the ends together. Punch two holes at the top and add string. Hang the wind sock outside (weather permitting) or hang it in a window as a reminder of God's sending the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Conclude by reading together Acts 2:1-4. At the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond together, "COME HOLY SPIRIT!" Sing "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" or "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing," or one of your favorite hymns that celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit.