

What is Pentecost Sunday?

Pentecost Sunday is a commemoration and celebration of the receiving of the Holy Spirit by the early church. John the Baptist prophesied of the first Pentecost where Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). Jesus confirmed this prophesy with the promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples in John 14:26. He showed Himself to these men after His death on the cross and His Resurrection, giving convincing proofs that He was alive. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit, from whom they would receive power to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:3-8). After Jesus' ascension to heaven, the men returned to Jerusalem and joined together in prayer in an upper room. On the Day of Pentecost, just as promised, a violent wind filled the house and tongues of fire came to rest on each of them and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were given the power of communication which Peter used to begin the ministry for which Jesus had prepared him. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples did not stay in the room basking in God's glory but burst out to tell the world. This was the beginning of the Church as we know it.

Today, in many Christian churches, Pentecost Sunday is celebrated to recognize the gift of the Holy Spirit, realizing that God's very life, breath and energy lives in believers. During this service, John 20:19-23 may be the core of the message about our risen Savior supernaturally appearing to the fear-laden disciples. Their fear gave way to joy when the Lord showed them His hands and side. He assured them peace and repeated the command given in Matthew 28:19-20 saying; "as the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Then He breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-23).

The celebration of Pentecost Sunday reminds us of the reality that we all have the unifying Spirit that was poured out upon the first century church in Acts 2:1-4. It is a reminder that we are co-heirs with Christ, to suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him; that the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7); that we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13); and that the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead lives inside believers (Romans 8:9-11). This gift of the Holy Spirit that was promised and given to all believers on the first Pentecost is promised for you and your children and for all who are far off whom the Lord our God will call (Acts 2:39).

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