

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

FIRE

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The Holy Spirit (John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15)

The Church's Feast of Pentecost is rooted in the second book written by the author of Luke's Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles. Luke closes the resurrection appearances of Jesus with the Ascension and with Jesus' promised gift of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit came to the apostles and settled on them like tongues of fire. It is for this reason that tongues of fire have become a classic image for the Holy Spirit. Jesus' promise of the gift of the Spirit also features in John's account of the farewell discourse as Jesus prepares his disciples for his death, in the passages selected for our Gospel reading.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *fire*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 16.12-14; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'I still have many things to say to you,
but you cannot bear them now.
When the Spirit of truth comes,
he will guide you into all the truth;
for he will not speak on his own,
but will speak whatever he hears,
and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
He will glorify me,
because he will take what is mine
and declare it to you.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord God,
you gave the Holy Spirit to your people,
like tongues of fire.
Set our hearts on fire with your love,
that we may spread your good news
to the ends of the earth;
we make our prayer in Jesus' name.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 15:26-27; 16.4b-15

‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

The Work of the Spirit

‘I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

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ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b-15)

Begin exploring John's account of Jesus' teaching about the gift of the Holy Spirit, following his death, by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What ideas does the name Advocate suggest about the work of the Holy Spirit?
- Why is Jesus telling his disciples about these things?
- How does John see the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore Luke's foundation narrative for the Feast of Pentecost.

- Luke 24: 45-53
- Acts 1: 1-5
- Acts 2: 1-13

Explore images of fire in the Old Testament.

- Exodus 3: 1-6
- Exodus 19: 16-18
- Exodus 24: 16-18

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of the Festival of Pentecost by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Feast of Pentecost
- Paraclete in John's Gospel (the Greek word translated Advocate)
- Pentecost in paintings

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on the Day of Pentecost is *fire*. Draw on your experience of fire.

- Have you experienced the destructive power of fire?
- Have you experienced the creative power of fire?
- Has your imagination been caught by the power of a steam engine?

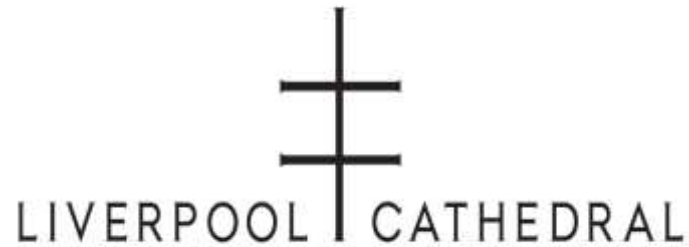
What have you learned about the image of fire for God the Holy Spirit?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the tongues of fire at Pentecost.

- Create a collage celebrating the creative power of fire.
- Create a poster illustrating Luke's account of the Day of Pentecost.
- Make headbands with tongues of fire.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of the Day of Pentecost.

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EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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