

About the Readings on 5.19.24

## **Day of Pentecost**

Fifty days after Passover, Jews kept the Pentecost festival, which originally celebrated the wheat harvest but had become the commemoration of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. As the fiftieth day of Easter, Christians maintained the festival, altering its focus to a celebration of the Spirit of the risen Christ in the church. In an oblique reference to Sinai, the fire of God's word is now on the foreheads of the faithful. In John's gospel, the Spirit brings the truth of God into the believing community. In current parlance, Pentecost concludes the Easter season and lasts one day; it is not an ongoing season (*ELW*, pp. 14, 37).

### **Acts 2:1-21**

The narrative of Pentecost exemplifies Luke's expert storytelling ability. The reading includes hidden references to the Hebrew Bible, a citation from the prophets, a contemporary geography lesson, an account of miracles, and the folksy detail of the accusation of drunkenness. As we await the eschatological end of all things, we are now those who prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. Although some Christians connect glossolalia with Pentecost, Luke describes these "tongues" as other languages with which to evangelize the world.

**Psalm 104:24-34, 35b** The psalm for the day, **Psalm 104:24-34, 35b**, is a psalm in which it is usual to translate the Hebrew of verse 30 with the term "Spirit," rather than "breath" or "wind." The psalm praises God the creator, whose Spirit continually creates all that lives. Verses 27-28 have become part of a common table prayer. In an example of the lectionary's use of the Bible, the condemnation of verse 35a is omitted.

### **Romans 8:22-27**

We and the whole creation are groaning in labor, awaiting the birth of God's new age in which Christ's resurrection will renew all things. Until that end time, we have the Spirit who is praying for us before God.

### **John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

The Gospel of John is appointed for most of the primary festivals of the liturgical year because of John's high Christology and its centrality in the development of Christian doctrine. John says theologically the narrative of Pentecost: God sends the Spirit into the gathered community so that they can know the truth of Christ's resurrection. Christian theology subsumed John's description of the Advocate into its understanding of the Holy Spirit, and passages such as this led to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Spirit is now the link between the believing community and God.