

The Liturgical Seasons of the Catholic Church



PENTECOST

Happy birthday to the Catholic Church!

Happy birthday to you, who are the body of the Church!



"God is Love" and love is his first gift, containing all others.

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

We're all familiar with our own birthdays, and we celebrate them because they mark the day of the year in which we entered into this life. But did you know you have a second birthday?

Because you are part of the body of the Church, and Pentecost is the Church's birthday, it's yours as well!

And like any birthday, it's a cause for celebration.

On that first day of Pentecost, Christ's Passover was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit - God's Gift - manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person in abundance to the Apostles and Mary. By His coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit caused the world to enter into the "last days," the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated. The baptized regained the divine likeness lost through sin through forgiveness borne of love that heals and brings new life. On that day, the Holy Trinity was fully revealed in all three persons. Peter, the first Pope, preached for the first time and converted thousands of new believers, the first Catholics. The Apostles and believers, for the first time, were united by a common language, and a common zeal and purpose to go and preach the Gospel.

Since that day, the Kingdom lost to man by our forefather's disobedience to Our Father, then announced by Christ, has been open to those who believe in him: in the humility of the flesh and in faith, all are able to share in the communion of the indivisible

Holy Trinity, who has saved us. The very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as "God [has] loved us," became our mission. This love (the "charity" of 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received "power" from the Holy Spirit, we received God's "pledge" and the "first fruits" of our inheritance. God's children can bear much fruit if "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit." Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of Heaven, and adopted as His children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called Children of Light and given a share in eternal glory: We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith: We are now grafted onto the true vine.





"Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 4:6).

At Pentecost, Jews from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem. Peter, the other Apostles, Mary and their followers were gathered in a room. At this time, a great wind blew and a flame appeared as a tongue of fire, which split itself into many individual flames above the heads of all those present. The Holy Spirit came upon these people and each began to speak in tongues. Despite the fact many had no common language, they were perfectly able to understand one another.

The Holy Spirit also gave the Apostles other gifts necessary to possess in order to fulfill the great commission - to go out and preach the Gospel to all nations and so that they might also bear the fruits.

This fulfills the New Testament promise from Christ (Luke 24:46-49) that the Apostles would be "clothed with power" before they would be sent out to spread the Gospel.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord.

The 12 fruits are: charity (love), joy, peace, patience, benignity (kindness), goodness, longanimity (generosity), mildness (gentleness), faithfulness, modesty, continency (self-control), and chastity. *(These gifts and fruits are given to all disciples of Christ as they participate in their sacramental journey and grow in faith to help them stay true to God's Will.)*

Others who were not so blessed, accused those speaking in tongues of being drunk, but Peter arose and addressed the crowd, explaining that it was only 9 o'clock, and that this phenomenon was not intoxication, but rather this was the work of the Holy Spirit, prophesized in the scripture.

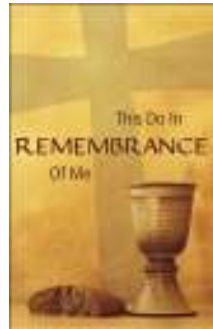
Peter then called all those present to repent of their sins and be baptized and about three thousand people were baptized that day.



Pentecost: Origins, Symbols and Customs Around the World

The word Pentecost is Greek (pentecoste) and it means "50th day." So fifty days after Easter Sunday (on the seventh Sunday after Easter) Christians celebrate the holy day of Pentecost, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles ... it changed their lives by beginning their Earthly ministry to make disciples of all nations ... and it changed the lives of all those who came after ... just as it still is today.

Pentecost is also a Jewish holiday, Shavu'ot, which the Jews use to celebrate the end of Passover, which was originally a harvest feast. Now Jews celebrate the gift of the law (Torah) to Moses at Mt. Sinai on this day to seal the old covenant. But we, as Catholics celebrate the birth of our Church and the new covenant.



The symbols of Pentecost are the flame, wind, and the dove, which represents the Holy Spirit.

Special prayers are often said just for Pentecost.

The timing of the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost is where Catholics get the concept of the Novena - nine days of prayer - because in Acts 1, Mary and the Apostles prayed together "continuously" for nine days after the Ascension leading up to Pentecost. So traditionally, the Church prays the Novena to the Holy Spirit in the days before Pentecost.

The colour of Pentecost is red so typically, priests will wear red vestments on Pentecost, symbolic of the burning fire of God's love and the tongues of fire that descended on the Apostles. Parishioners are also invited to wear red on this day. Red decorations as well as celebrations are appropriate, similar to any other birthday.

However, in some parts of the world, Pentecost is also referred to as "WhitSunday", or White Sunday, referring to the white vestments that are typically worn in Britain and Ireland. The white is symbolic of the dove of the Holy Spirit, and typical of the vestments that catechumens desiring baptism wear on that day.

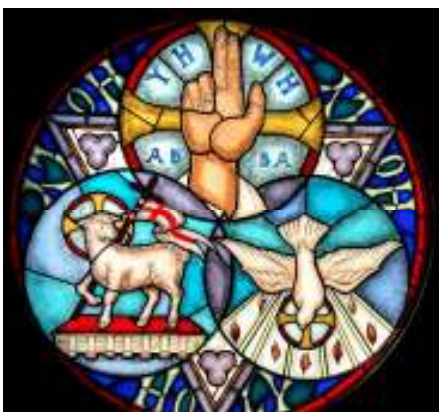
An Italian Pentecost tradition is to scatter rose leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues, and so in some places in Italy, Pentecost is sometimes called Pascha Rosatum (Easter roses).

In France, it is tradition to blow trumpets during Mass to recall the sound of the driving wind of the Holy Spirit.

In Asia, it is typical to have an extra service, called genuflexion, during which long poems and prayers are recited.

In Russia, Mass goers often carry flowers or green branches during Pentecost services.





The Holy Spirit and the Church

From the beginning to the end of time, whenever God sends His Son, He always sends His Spirit: their mission is conjoined and inseparable.

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity's communion with men.

This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in His communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prepares men and goes out to them with His grace, in order to draw them to Christ.

In the fullness of time at God's behest the Holy Spirit completed in Mary all the preparations for Christ's coming among the People of God. By the action of the Holy Spirit in her, the Father gives the world Emmanuel "God-with-us." (Mt 1:23). The Son of God was consecrated as Christ (Messiah) by the anointing of the Holy Spirit at His Incarnation (Ps 2:6-7).

The Spirit is then seen throughout Christ's life and works, for example at His baptism, in His miracles and words and prayers to bring understanding to those who listen, hear and see.

The Spirit then manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls His word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of His Death and Resurrection: By His Death and His Resurrection, Jesus is constituted in glory as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). From His fullness, He poured out the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and the Church. The Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may receive gifts and "bear much fruit."

Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity. These "mighty works of God," offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit, the artisan of God's works, the master of prayer.

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and His own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us ... and makes all appear as one in Him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity.

Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among His members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to His self-offering to the Father and to His intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates His Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of His Body.

