

promise of the shining that touched Moses' face when he was given the law. In Moses' day, only Moses himself glowed with the radiance of God. Thanks to Jesus, the entire Christian community, then and now, is touched by the Holy Spirit. The faces of all the First Christians were radiant with God's glory. Their leader, Peter, preached the sermon of his life, and, as we hear in one of the several options for the lessons, the passage from Acts, 3000 were added to the Faithful in one day.

Another lesson option, that from First Corinthians, tells of the gifts the God gave the Church through the Holy Spirit, gifts that make it possible for us to serve God and his Church better in various capacities. Many congregations better understand what God has infused in his Faithful because they have shared in *Spiritual Gifts Workshops*, a learning process designed to help us know, understand and employ the abilities God infused in us through the Spirit. Look into one for your parish!

The Day of Pentecost Blessing

May almighty God, who enlightened the minds of the disciples by pouring out upon them the Holy Spirit, make you rich with his blessing, that you may abound more and more in that Spirit for ever. **AMEN.**

May God, who sent the Holy Spirit as a flame of fire that rested upon the heads of the disciples, burn out all evil from your hearts, and make them shine with the pure light of his presence. **AMEN.**

May God, who by the Holy Spirit caused those of many tongues to proclaim Jesus as Lord, strengthen your faith and send you out to bear witness to him in word and deed. **AMEN.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **AMEN.**

From the Book of Occasional Services

Please prepare John 3:1-17 for next Sunday.



Pentecost

Duccio di Buoninsegna (1308)

Tempera on wood

(Panel From *The Maesta*)

Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena

Today's Gospel: Saint John 7:37-39a [Year ABC Pentecost Vigil]

✠ ON THE LAST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL, THE GREAT DAY, WHILE JESUS WAS standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." ' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive;

COME TO ME, AND ... DRINK

for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. [© NRSV]

OR

Today's Gospel: St John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 [Year B, Pentecost]

✠ JESUS SAID, "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. "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 judgment: 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 judgment, 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. [© NRSV]

A Great Jewish Feast

We often think of Pentecost as a Christian feast and of course it is but it, like Passover, began as still another Jewish celebration that was "Baptized" by the Church. The Season of Easter, sometimes referred to as Pascaltide, is still dated by a highly variable lunar calendar like the one used by first century Jews. Easter usually (but not always) falls within a few days of Passover, the festival it replaced. The name itself, *Pascaltide*, - we hear it in several Easter hymns and of course in the *Pascal*

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Candle - is derived from the Hebrew term for the Passover, *Pesach*.

St. Paul gives us Passover imagery in I Cor. 10. He believes that the saving grace for the Israelites was their confidence in the future coming of the Messiah.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

The symbolism is that even as Moses led the People of Israel in their Passover from the plagues of Egypt, their Passover from certain death in the Red Sea and their Passover from probable starvation in the wilderness, guiding them to the Earthly Promised Land; so too, Jesus, a man greater than Moses, has led us through spiritual starvation and the vicissitudes of this life to pass through the waters of Baptism, be fed on the Living Bread of Christ as he strengthens our lives until we make our final Passover to the Heavenly Promised land.

The Origin of Pentecost

Pentecost, or as it is known to the Jews, *Shavuot*, is the Jewish *Feast of Weeks*, began as an agricultural festival celebrated 50 days after Pesach, near the end of the wheat harvest. Two loaves weighing over five pounds each were baked from the flour of just harvested wheat. The bread was "waved" by the clergy in their offering of thanks to God for his bounty.

In time a new significance was added: The Jews universally celebrated the day as the anniversary of God's giving the law to Moses.¹

To an early Christian the flames that came from a single source and touched the heads of all the assembled Christians might well have been seen as the fulfillment of the

¹ In the non-Biblical book of *Jubilees*, (it was rediscovered in the 19th century) it is said that some thought the festival celebrated the day when God promised Noah that he would never again destroy the Earth by flood.