

Pentecost

SUNDAY

MAY 31, 2020



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Jesus breathed on them and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are
forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

John 20:22-23

Saint Charles Lwanga And His Companions (martyred 1886-87)

June 3

“Master of Pages,” reputedly the handsomest man in all Uganda, Charles Lwanga, lay catechist, courageously led about forty teenaged boys, Catholics and Anglicans, on a forty-mile forced march to martyrdom for their common Christian faith. Teaching each other the hymns of their different churches, they strengthened one another for the ordeal ahead. King Mwanga, himself barely twenty, had ordered them executed for being “those who pray.” But these royal pages were the king’s male harem, who, now Christians, refused what pious accounts demurely describe as his “unreasonable demands.” Some were clubbed to death, most burned alive; the youngest, thirteen-year old Saint Kizito, whom Charles had often shielded from the King’s lust; the most tragic, Saint Mbagga, whose father was his executioner! In 1964, Paul VI canonized the young Catholics and praised their Anglican companions, recalling the heroism of early Christianity’s African martyrs, which we modern Christians of far less faith never expected to see repeated. Forty years after the pope’s words, what does our faith cost us? Heroism aside, how generous is our response?

—Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Pentecost

Unless the eye catch fire, God will not be seen.
Unless the ear catch fire, God will not be heard.
Unless the tongue catch fire, God will not be named.
Unless the heart catch fire, God will not be loved.
Unless the mind catch fire, God will not be known.

—William Blake

The Richness Of The Spirit

Students, and most adults recalling their school days, are familiar with the phrase “compare and contrast” that shows up from time to time on tests. Today we hear two different accounts of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the church. Let’s contrast, then compare. Luke’s account from Acts is filled with arresting details: the mighty wind from heaven, the tongues of flame, the miracle of different languages. John’s account seems timid: fearful disciples, the wounded Christ, the expelling of breath from his risen body, not from the sky. Our literal, modern minds wonder which way it happened; our noisy culture probably makes us prefer the former. But if we compare the two, we find that the dazzling richness of the Spirit fills both accounts, for it is the very breath of the risen Christ, ascended to the sky in Luke, that appears to his disciples in John and sends his followers forth to carry on his mission of forgiving sin and proclaiming the mighty acts of God.

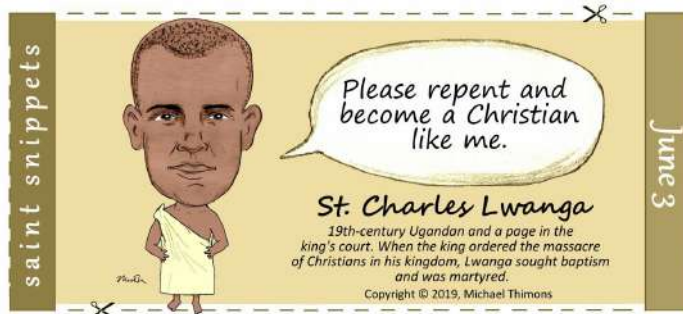
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Gn 3:9-15, 20 or Acts 1:12-14; Ps 87:1-3, 5-7; Jn 19:25-34
Tuesday:	2 Pt 3:12-15a, 17-18; Ps 90:2-4, 10, 14, 16; Mk 12:13-17
Wednesday:	2 Tm 1:1-3, 6-12; Ps 123:1b-2; Mk 12:18-27
Thursday:	2 Tm 2:8-15; Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-10, 14; Mk 12:28-34
Friday:	2 Tm 3:10-17; Ps 119:157, 160, 161, 165, 166, 168; 1-6; Mk 12:35-7
Saturday:	2 Tm 4:1-8; Ps 71:8-9, 14-15ab, 16-17, 22; Mk 12:38-44
Sunday:	Ex 34:4b-6, 8-9; Dn 3:52-55; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Pentecost Sunday
Monday:	The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church; Ninth Week in Ordinary Time
Tuesday:	Ss. Marcellinus and Peter
Wednesday:	St. Charles Lwanga and Companions
Friday:	St. Boniface; First Friday
Saturday:	St. Norbert; First Saturday



Today's Readings

First Reading — Filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles begin to speak in tongues (Acts 2:1-11).

Psalm — Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth (Psalm 104).

Second Reading — In one Spirit we are baptized into one body and given to drink of one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13).

Gospel — Jesus Christ appears to the disciples and sends them on their mission with the power to forgive or retain sins through the Holy Spirit (John 20:19-23).

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Treasures From Our Tradition

Before there was water, there was fire. Once in a while, a volcano hints at the sizzling magma upon which the whole human enterprise floats. Over eons, the surface cooled off a bit, and rain sizzled down for thousands of centuries, filling the oceans and sculpting the earth. We Christians can catch God's glory in a shimmering pool of water, but we can also capture God's burning desire to fan the tiny flames of our baptismal candles into something that will make a difference. In Sicily to this day, there is a custom of scattering rose petals down from the ceiling of church on the heads of the faithful, an effective reminder of the "tongues of flame" descending on the apostles, and a sign that the Holy Spirit still is poured out on the baptized. It is not merely a quaint custom, but a fairly potent sign of what baptism does. An interesting sidebar: if you have traced the Epiphany blessing on your doorway in chalk, Pentecost is the day to erase it. From now on, no need to rely on the "wise men"—you are alive in the Spirit!
—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

When we were in high school, there was an old cheer at ballgames, "We've got spirit, yes we do. We've got spirit, how 'bout you?" We would scream it back and forth with the opposing team's fans. And while, "Got Spirit?" could certainly be the catchphrase today, we see people receiving the spirit in many different ways. In Acts, there is a bombastic appearance of a loud noise and a driving wind, followed by people being able to understand speech in many languages. It is reminiscent of a booming, "This is my Son, my Beloved." Psalm 104 "Lord, Send out Your Spirit" was also the first psalm used at the Easter Vigil, in response to the creation story. First Corinthians acknowledges that there are many different spiritual gifts, but we must use them together as the body of Christ. The Sequence is a beautiful prayer that calls down the Spirit. In John's Gospel, the Spirit comes through the breath of Jesus. What can we take away from this? That the Spirit of God is not "one size fits all." Rather, the Holy Spirit will come to us, speak to us, be given to us, as each of us needs.

Unlock The Doors

When we put the Gospel in its context, John 20 starts with the empty tomb and the appearance to Mary Magdalene. Still, the disciples were scared and confused. They gathered together to regroup. They locked the door for fear of the Jews, whom they had just experienced as an angry mob, whom they had just seen crucify their friend Jesus. These disciples were afraid of the Jews, but they may also have been feeling guilty and confused for running away from Jesus at the cross, for hiding, for trying to protect themselves.

Now the risen Jesus comes to them saying, "Peace be with you," showing them his wounds, and greeting them again. Jesus is modeling something very powerful here. Most of us hate to be vulnerable. We try to hide our

wounds and scars. We try to protect ourselves and show everybody that we have it together. In order to be healed, to receive the Spirit, to move on in our lives, we need to unlock our internal doors. We need to let Jesus into our house, into our hearts, and into those darkened corners of ourselves. It might be frightening. It might mean going to the sacrament of reconciliation or speaking with a spiritual director or even with a therapist.

Receive The Holy Spirit

We often worry about how others will respond if we are less than perfect. Jesus knew the disciples were flawed humans. He did not get angry or give them a guilt trip. He said, "Peace be with you." He was gentle. Jesus gave them the gift of new life through a simple gesture. He breathed the Spirit into them. This is reminiscent of Genesis, when God breathed life into Adam, and Ezekiel, when God breathed life back into the dry bones. Jesus concluded with, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." So not only did Jesus entrust them with this role, this power, he first showed them how it is done. How do we in turn breathe life into our families and friends? Our coworkers? The stranger we meet?

Today's Readings: Acts 2:1–11 Ps 104: 1, 24, 29–30, 31, 34; 1 Cor 12:3b–7, 12–13; Jn 20:19–23

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