

EIGHT SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS:
YEAR A 2023

Plunge into Mystery:
Scriptural Reflections on
Pentecost Communities



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God created us to know and serve Him here on earth and be happy with Him forever – this simple sentence of old captures two thousand years of church theological and catechetical teachings. Sainly mystics and all seekers after truth, professional theologians and people in the pews share this belief.

Experiencing God in our lives, Growing a community and Proclaiming the Good News are all works of the Holy Spirit as testified by the Acts of the Apostles. The phrases are the key to understanding the liturgical period from Easter to Pentecost. The Scripture read in the liturgy keeps reminding us about the work of the Holy Spirit in forming and guiding the first Christian communities. The Spirit of Jesus abided with them as promised.

The Scripture read in the liturgy around Pentecost is long. It often repeats the message that believers in Jesus are chosen to work with the Holy Spirit, growing as individuals and community. The readings also invite us, particularly as church communities, to remember life in the early church and emulate it. The early Christians encapsulated an experience of new life in God.

The final period of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is complete with Pentecost. It is called mystagogy, a Greek word meaning 'to lead through the mysteries of knowing God'. Early church communities had this task, and it is equally a task of church communities in the 21st century. Throughout human history, every religious rite and movement, small or large and from whatever culture, had this ultimate aim. More than offering codes of conduct or placating fear, religions grapple with the mystery of knowing the divine.

Empowered by the abiding Holy Spirit, early and modern church communities gradually introduce the newly baptised followers of Jesus to a life of belonging. They embrace a simple but profound way of knowing God – mystagogy for them. They find help as the Holy Spirit infuses believers with the gifts they need to be part of a Christian community. They grow in confidence to proclaim the Mystery of God alive in humanity, in the earth and all it holds, in the evolving cosmos – telling the story of their experiences, through belief in Jesus as the Christ. to meet a kind and loving God living in all creation.

Observers of these early church communities in the Acts of the Apostles said, See how they love one another. Among their various ministries, they set up a ministry of service to help the poor among them. Their actions showed the divine mystery of love operating in day-to-day life.

Mission was central to the life of the early church. Under the Spirit, the Christian communities were called to be expansive in how they thought and acted. They were to Go to the nations, proclaiming the Good News of Christ to the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit worked with them, teaching and leading them to be expansive.

Communion was a hallmark of the early church communities. The Holy Spirit kept them united. The Spirit opened their hearts, correcting narrow ideas about who could follow Jesus. The Spirit helped them apply the Message of Jesus to multiple cultures, thus growing communities in many languages, but welding them together in Communion.

'Come, Holy Spirit' has become the prayer of every church community united throughout the world.



Plunge into Mystery: SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS

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Format for the Eight Reflections

- Title
- Name of the Grace to celebrate
- Excerpts from Sunday Liturgical Scriptural Readings around Pentecost
- Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful
- Thanksgiving Prayer (theology of God’s gifts)
- Comments on the qualities of Spirit-led Christian Communities
- Papal quotes

Notes on these Pentecost Reflections

1. This resource of eight reflections draws from the liturgy around Pentecost. Our knowledge and experience of God is a mystery. Religions and philosophers of every age and culture have wrestled with this mystery. Most humbly admit that we can only snatch glimpses. We are blessed in that the abiding Spirit of God is with us in our stumbling efforts.
2. This schema collects scriptural stories that play back and forth between God’s initiatives and

human responses. Remembering how the Holy Spirit worked with early church communities, as told especially in the Acts of the Apostles, gives us courage and the example to plunge into the mystery of God.

3. The Thanksgiving Prayers proclaim acts of faith drawn from the Scriptural readings. The Prayers of the Faithful ask for understanding and healing of relationship based on the truth that God has loved us first.
4. Other explanatory paragraphs in the resource reinforce the scriptural readings. Relevant quotations from recent papal writings ground us in the Catholic tradition.
5. Images focus on artistic representations of the Holy Spirit working in faith communities.

Hymns and Music

Many pastorally relevant hymns carry lyrics and emotions linking the work of the Holy Spirit to faith communities.

1. SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Receive the Holy Spirit

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture reminds us to celebrate the grace of baptism. Through baptism, the Spirit of God lives in us more deeply. Our lives in the church and the world are neither leaderless nor without purpose. The power of the Spirit unites us as we witness the reality of God sharing life with all creation, an ever-evolving act of loving kindness and an awe-inspiring truth.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 4:32–35; Ps 118; 1Jn 5:1–6; Jn 20:19–31

Community of believers of one heart and mind.

With great power

the apostles bore witness to the resurrection.

No needy person among them,

property distributed according to need.

God's mercy endures forever.

My courage is God.

The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

This is the day the Lord has made

*whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ
is born of God.*

Obey his commands, not burdensome

begotten by God, conquers the world.

Believe Jesus as the Son of God

The Spirit is the one that testifies,

and the Spirit is truth.

On the first day of the week,

*Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said, 'Peace be with you.'*

He showed them his hands and side.

As the Father sent me, so I send you

breathed on them, Receive the Holy Spirit'

Thomas was away when Jesus came

Unless I see the mark of the nails,

I will not believe.

A week later, Jesus came again.

Thomas, put your hand into my side.

Do not be unbelieving, but believe.

My Lord and my God

'Blessed not seen yet believe.

Jesus performed many other signs.

These are written that you may believe

so you may have life in his name.

Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Mystery of God – God's inner self revealed in evolving life. That we search for the many names God given by diverse cultures as their gift to all people searching for purpose. We pray ...
2. Creation – God created the cosmos and all it contains. That we strive to know God revealed in land and sea, in every plant and animal, in the diversity of human cultures. We pray ...
3. Communities of believers – God has formed the People of God in our place and time. That we rejoice in our calling as we confidently go into the world and engage with it. We pray ...
4. Led by the Spirit – The Son of God gifted the disciples with the Holy Spirit. That as individuals and church we never feel leaderless, but trust the Spirit abiding with us, teaching and giving courage. We pray ...
5. Realities – God is alive within every social and environmental reality. That we not sink into aimless living but, in the Holy Spirit, plunge confidently into the realities of the world. We pray ...





Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks through Christ Jesus
And in his Spirit abiding in our community.
Those baptised in the name of Jesus are bathed
in the Holy Spirit to complete their conversion.
The Spirit came upon them like tongues of fire.
God lives and works in them in a new way,
growing to know the mystery of God more deeply.
United, with new purpose, confident
they proclaim the truth of God's universal love.
And so we join the Messengers of God
the saints and all people of good will
and earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God.
– Pope Francis Laudato Si #9



Divine Mercy Sunday

St Pope John Paul II established this feast day on the Second Sunday after Easter. It grew out of the devotion of a Polish Sister, Faustina Kowalska. Her writings in the 1930s focused on seeking forgiveness for sin, reviving the gifts of baptism, and promoting sacramental confession leading to communion on that day. She was canonised on 30 April 2000. Although it has less resonance in English, 'mercy' is a recurring word for Pope Francis. For him, it teases out both the nature of God's eternal loving kindness and the response of believers to hearing the twin cry of the poor and the earth.

Ecstasy

A marble sculpture of the Spanish Carmelite St Teresa of Avila in the Roman church of Santa Maria della Vittoria shows her swooning in a state of religious ecstasy. An angel holding a spear stands over her, signifying the piercing love of God that has entered her heart. Many saints have written about their experience of being totally one with God. This union is infused as a gift, not earned. Notable spiritual writers refer to it as the illuminative way. Others speak of feeling at total peace or going outside of oneself. Poets have tried to capture this reality of union with God.

Love impels us towards universal communion ... part of a continuing adventure.
– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #95

2. THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Recognise and Proclaim Jesus

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture inspires us to celebrate that we are graced as missionaries to witness to knowing the Good News, Jesus the Christ sent for all. He is the anointed of God. Now his Spirit continues at the core of our faith communities, speaking and working through us. Whatever the social situation of people, we can help lead them to meet Jesus at a deep level of encounter.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 5:27–32, 40b–41; Ps 30; Rev 5:11–14;

Jn 21:1–19

Apostles stand before the Sanhedrin

Ordered to stop teaching in that name

We must obey God rather than men

The God of our ancestors raised Jesus

Holy Spirit given to those who obey Jesus

Rejoicing to suffer for the sake of the name

Praise God who rescues

God's anger lasts but a moment

God changed my mourning into dancing

John heard angels, living creatures, elders

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

Receive power, wisdom and strength

Everything in the universe cries out, Amen.

Jesus revealed himself to his disciples ,

Jesus stood on the shore and asked

Caught anything? They answered, No!'

Cast the net over the right side of the boat

– one hundred and fifty-three large fish

Though many, the net was not torn

They realized it was the Lord

Jesus took the bread; gave it to them

and in like manner the fish.

A third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples

Simon, do you love me more than these?

Yes, Lord, you know that I love you

Feed my lambs, tend and feed my sheep

Lead where you do not want to go. Follow me.



Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Know God – God loves us and wants union with us. That we not fear to explore how God is present in us and our world, not afraid to share how we experience God in our lives. We pray ...
2. Earth, Our Home – God gave us the land of Israel as our home. That we cherish the place where we live, learning from it and respecting its unique gifts, glad to care for it and its systems. We pray ...
3. Diverse Communities – God grows diverse human communities like flowers in the fields. That in heart and mind we be open to appreciate diverse ways and dialogue to the benefit of all. We pray ...
4. New Ways – God challenged the leaders of Israel to grow. That we work with the abiding Holy Spirit to create new ways that respect others – people and nature – as a new pathway to peace. We pray ...
5. Trauma – God led Israel through the trials of history. That we not turn from people in trauma but, with the Holy Spirit, use our talents and resources to grow ways of healing. We pray ...



Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
And his Spirit abiding in our community.
Anointed with courage in the Spirit,
Peter boldly proclaimed Jesus before the
authorities,
Naming him as Saviour of every nation.
People of every culture grew to know Jesus,
meeting him at a deep level of encounter.
And so we join the Messengers of God
The saints and all people of good will
And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

*All creation is bound up with the mystery of
Christ, present from the beginning.*

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #99



Mystagogy

Liturgically, mystagogy is the final period in the journey for those baptised at Easter using the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). It is a Greek word, meaning to lead through the mysteries of knowing God. Early church communities had this task, and it is equally a task of church communities in the 21st century. Throughout human history, every religious rite and movement, small or large, had this final aim. More than offering codes of conduct or placating fear, religions grapple with the mystery of knowing the divine.

Encounter with Jesus

The word ‘encounter’ in the English language often carries a negative connotation. It has a more positive meaning in Latin languages and is a favourite word of Pope Francis. For him, encountering another is like a friendly face-to-face meeting. It connotes understanding, love and care. This is the way Jesus encounters us. In this Jesus way, the Pope wants us to experience the loving kindness of God, who is concerned for us as individuals, concerned for our unique social situation. Speaking to Jesus in prayer is the way to start. We share our inner thoughts and feelings with a friend.

*In the creed, believers enter into the mystery
which they profess and to be transformed.*

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #45

3. FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Good Shepherd

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture reminds us that the Holy Spirit gifts us to trust Jesus and speak of him as the Good Shepherd. He leads everyone to the social pastures that sustain us so we do not feel alone or lost. Jesus listens to the doubts and troubles of his followers. The Shepherd guides them into ways of peace.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 2:14a, 36–41; Ps 23; 1 Pt 2:20b–25; Jn 10:1–10

Peter proclaimed: God made Jesus

both Lord and Messiah,

this Jesus whom you crucified.

Repent, be baptised, receive the Holy Spirit

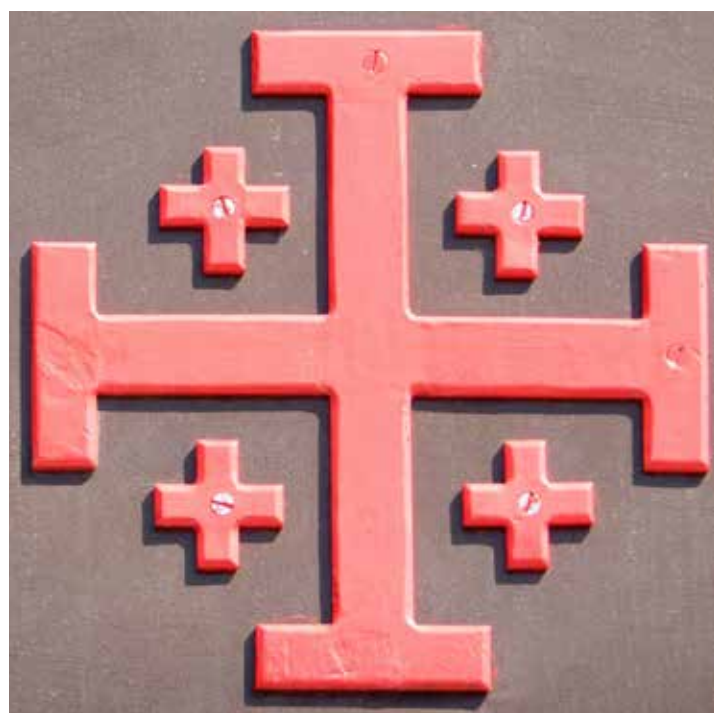
three thousand baptised that day.

The Lord is my shepherd

I shall not want, he leads me to

verdant pastures, restful waters.

I fear no evil, you at my side.



*You spread a table before me
my cup overflows.*

*Goodness and kindness all my life
I shall dwell in the house of God.*

Be patient when you suffer

Christ suffered for you

leaving you an example.

You had gone astray like sheep.

I know my sheep, and mine know me.

*The shepherd calls his sheep by name
they recognise his voice.*

I am the gate for the sheep

whoever enters will be saved.

I came so that they might have life

and have it more abundantly.

Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. God in all – From creation to sending the Son, God is close. That we believe deeply and experience God in every-day life, close to the incarnate Jesus, both human and divine. We pray ...
2. Farms – God uses nature to lead us into divine realities. That we appreciate farmers and graziers as they listen to the land and the rhythm of the seasons, learning the ways of the creator. We pray ...
3. Community – God saw that Adam was alone. That we appreciate the social places where we belong, in family and community groups, and be open to wider relationships. We pray ...
4. Earth speaks – God ordained the life-giving cycles of nature. That we listen to the Spirit speaking through earth, crying as humans alter the seasons and cause loss of biodiversity. We pray ...
5. The Hungry – God shows a preferential care for the poor. That we not shut our eyes to the starving people and support global agencies offering help and long-term solutions. We pray ...



Open ourselves to the interior presence enables us to recognize his mystery.

– Pope Francis Lumen Fidei #31

Believing Communities

The communities that follow Jesus have carried the Good News through millennia. The baptised are the Body of Christ. The Church as his Body consists of multiple faith communities drawn from many languages. Individuals are taught and corrected, encouraged and nourished by belonging to a community of believers. The Gospel of John states that the faith of an individual withers if it is cut off from their church community, cut off from Jesus as the vine. Believers join a shared journey of faith. Place and time matter because each community is located in a particular place and time in history, gifted with a unique vocation to be the local light of Christ.

Acts of the Apostles

The Acts of the Apostles follows from the Gospel of Luke. As a theological narrative, it tells how the Holy Spirit formed the early church communities and how they developed and matured. The Spirit gathered believers together to rejoice as they experienced the Risen Lord present with them. The Spirit gave disciples the courage to stand up before authorities and proclaim Jesus, to become missionaries not only to the Jewish people but to the nations, the Gentiles. The Spirit raised ministries of leadership and service to help the poor materially. Observers said, See how they love one another. Under the Holy Spirit, step by step the early communities began to grow the initial shape of the Church. Some writers call the Acts of the Apostle the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
And his Spirit abiding in our community.
Jesus is proclaimed as the Good Shepherd
leading, sustaining and caring
for those living in doubt, pain and worry.
Jesus guides into ways of peace.
And so we join the Messengers of God
The saints and all people of good will
And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Incarnation, the mystery of Christ at work in a hidden manner in the natural world without impinging on its autonomy.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #99

4. FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Proclaim the Loving Outreach of God to the Gentiles

Grace and Social Aspects to Celebrate

Today's Scripture invites us to celebrate the gift of courage to reach out to strangers. We recognise that the Holy Spirit lives within the entire human family – our sisters and brothers in a shared humanity. The Spirit leads us to listen to others, to dialogue with them in sharing our experiences of God, growing in mutual respect and appreciation that humanity is one family in God.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 14:21–27; Ps 145; Rev 21:1–5a; Jn 13:31–33a, 34–35

Paul with Barnabas proclaim good news

Lystra, Iconium, Antioch

strengthened the spirits of the disciples

appointed elders in each church.

Travelled to Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia

reported what God had done with them

opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

God slow to anger and of great kindness.

I will praise your name forever

make known a kingdom for all ages.

John saw a new heaven and a new earth

a new Jerusalem come from God

as a bride adorned for her husband.

God dwells with humankind

they will be his people

for the old order has passed away.

Behold, I make all things new.

Judas left them and Jesus said, now

the Son of Man glorified, and God in him.

I will be with you only a little while longer

I give a new commandment:

love one another as I have loved you

This is how all will know you are my disciples

if you have love for one another.



Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Multiple Religions – God stirs longing for the beyond in every heart. That our community reach out to learn from whatever faith with a sense of the beyond, glad for their insights. We pray ...
2. Nature Religions – The natural world was the first revelation of God. That through our experiences of the natural world we learn about God, creator of diversity and beauty. We pray ...
3. Social Relations – God as Trinity reveals love in relationship. That we join social groups to grow nurturing relationships with our brothers and sisters in the one human family. We pray ...
4. Atheists – God gave humankind the freedom to choose. That we accept that the Spirit blows where it wills, helping us to respect the reasons of those who do not believe in God. We pray ...
5. Communism – God works in unorthodox ways. That we be guided by the Holy Spirit to understand why nations adopt Communist governments in a search for the common good. We pray ...



Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
And his Spirit abiding in our community.
The Spirit led the early church to recognise that
God lives within the whole human family.
The Spirit leads dialogue with the other,
growing understanding and mutual respect
growing cooperation and peace.
And so we join the Messengers of God
The saints and all people of good will
And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...



Made in God's image each person is capable of entering into communion with other persons.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #65

A healthy relationship between love of one's native land and a sound sense of belonging to our larger human family ... communion.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #149

Discerning the Message

The Acts of the Apostles tells how early church communities developed and matured in their understanding of Christ. Cooperating with the Holy Spirit in significant decision-making, the disciples gradually discern the fullness of the Gospel message. Debates and differences were faced (16:6-7, 19:21, 20:22–23). In an evolving process of discernment, the church crafted a narrative about the workings of God, learning how the plan of Salvation was operating in their lives. This was the start of theology, a synodal process, as Pope Francis would call it. The early church set a precedent for believers to follow throughout two millennia. The pastoral Second Vatican Council worked under this same Spirit.

Nothingness and Mysticism

Nothingness is the name of a Chinese character used in Zen Buddhism and is key to its mystical understanding. It is not about absence. The character combines the characters for a human, a fence, a heart. It has a positive meaning that imagines the barrier between the human heart and the deeper self. Similar ideas appear in the writings of Christian mystics. The Buddhist practitioner meditates by sitting upright, regulating their breathing to a slow in-and-out. The meditation does not have a subject, only breathing in and out. It is not distracted by thoughts but just lets them drift by. Illumination comes in its own time. Jesuit William Johnston explains this in *The Inner Eye of Love* (1978, 2017). Benedictine Bede Griffiths writes similarly of Hindu experiences. The mystery of the beyond works in many ways.

5. SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

God Lives in All Peoples and Places

Grace to Celebrate

Today's Scripture reminds us that all people are called to know God. The Holy Spirit lives in every human heart that longs for more. The Spirit works within every restless soul that strives to grow as a person, building nations and cultures that nurture their family and community, and the very land that sustains them.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Ps 65; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21

*Philip went to Samaria proclaiming Christ
the crowds heard and saw the signs*

unclean spirits came out, cripples cured

the apostles sent Peter and John

who laid hands on them

and they received the Holy Spirit.

shout joyfully to God, all the earth

how tremendous are God's deeds

God changed the sea into dry land.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts

always ready to explain your hope

with gentleness and reverence.

It is better to suffer for doing good

Christ also suffered for sins once

that he might lead you to God

brought to life in the Spirit.

If you love me keep my commandments.

Father will give you another Advocate

to be with you always

the Spirit of truth, you know him,

remains with you, in you

I will not leave you orphans.

I am in my Father

and you are in me and I in you

who loves me, loved by my Father

I will love that one and reveal myself.



Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Holy Places – God revealed in the Wonders of Nature. That we thank God for ocean and forest vistas, wondering at their evolution of mountains and plains in geological time. We pray ...
2. Global Pollution – God saw creation and called it good. That the Spirit grant us courage to stop personal acts of polluting air, sea and land, and to work with all walking lightly on the earth. We pray ...
3. Local Church – God rejoices in the cultural diversity of Catholic communities. That church leaders lead us to create local liturgies that reflect God's unique action in space and time. We pray ...
4. Abiding Spirit – God in the Covenants remains faithful. That we listen and care for those racked by doubts about their faith or their ability to cope with the pressures of life. We pray ...
5. Migrants – God led the Chosen People through many lands. That we immerse ourselves in the land where we live, helping the stranger make a home in the place where we live. We pray ...



Primacy given to relationship, encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, universal communion with the entire human family.
 – Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti #277

Nature Religions

Inter-religious dialogue tends to ignore nature religions because of a bias towards the rational. John Paul II gave a different message when he said Australian Catholics must embrace Aboriginal insights to be complete. Pope Francis reinforces this message when he meets with indigenous peoples. Nature religions grew as humans wrestled with mystery. Experiences tended to occur in natural places and events aligned with the seasons. Musing led to both awe and fear. Complex rituals were designed to respect multiple deities and placate them. Storytelling, taboos and totems carried beliefs and codes of behaviour for the community. Nature religions invite Christians to look widely at the mysterious works of One God in Three Persons.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
 It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
 And his Spirit abiding in our community.
 The Holy Spirit instils longing in the human heart,
 striving to grow as persons,
 building nations and cultures,
 belonging in the very land that sustains them,
 creating local incarnated churches.
 And so we join the Messengers of God
 The saints and all people of good will
 And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Inculturation

This theological word combines the words culture and incarnation. It captures the reality that vibrant Christian communities take on the ‘cultural flesh’ of the place where they exist, affirming and purifying it. Inculturation cannot be imposed from outside in a plan to adapt Christian teachings and practices. It arises out of the lived experience of believers living within their culture. The WCC tends to use the phrase ‘contextual theology’. Others simply say ‘localisation’. The practice was exemplified in Paul’s speech to the Greeks and Cyril’s preaching to the Slavs. Since Europe’s 15th-century discovery of the New World, mission-minded popes have endorsed this theology as did Vatican II. The Holy Spirit continues to grow inculturated church communities that engage with the local marketplace.

Hearts authentically open to universal communion, fraternity excludes nothing and no one.
 – Pope Francis Laudato Si #92

6. THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD – with God to the End of Time

Grace and Social Aspects to Celebrate

Today's Scripture assures us that we are destined to sit with Christ at the side of God. Baptised in the Holy Spirit, we journey through the messiness of the world of armed conflicts and climate change, confronting human selfishness and economic dictatorships, conquering despair in the hope of sitting beside a loving God.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 1:1–11; Ps 47; Eph 1:17–23; Mt 28:16–20

instructions through the Holy Spirit

Jesus presented himself alive to them

appearing during forty days

speaking of the kingdom of God.

John baptized with water

you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Lord, will you to restore the kingdom to Israel?

you will receive power when the Spirit comes

you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Jesus was lifted up from their sight

why are you standing there looking at the sky

Jesus will return.

All you peoples, clap your hands

Jesus the great king over all the earth

sing praise to our king, sing praise.

God reigns over the nations,

May God give you a Spirit of wisdom



the eyes of your hearts be enlightened

know the hope that belongs to his call.

Christ, seated at God's right hand in the heavens

above authority, power, and dominion

in this age but also in the one to come

head over all things

to the church, which is his body.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee

they saw him, worshiped, but doubted.

Jesus said, Go make disciples of all nations

baptizing them in the name of the Father

and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

teaching them to observe all that I command.

I am with you always, until the end of the age.

Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Eternal Life – God invites us to sit with his Son at the right hand. That we put life eternal into our plans here on earth, broadening our hopes to prepare for experiencing the depth of God. We pray ...
2. Transformed Earth – God illumined the mundane with divine light in the Transfiguration. That we be enlightened through the incarnation of Jesus, joining the divine and the earthly. We pray ...
3. Promise and Hope – God formed believing communities as signs of hope to the world. That we let the Holy Spirit pool our talents to grow the energy of our local community. We pray ...
4. Power of the Spirit – God abides with believers until the end of time. That we call on the Spirit's power when we feel weak and our nation lost, knowing that our actions are signs of hope in society. We pray ...
5. Human Trials – God knows the trials of humanity and nations. That we plunge into the world, confident in the Spirit to be a force for good among suffering people and earth itself. We pray ...



Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
And his Spirit abiding in our community.
All those baptised into the Holy Spirit
hear and obey the command of Jesus
Go and proclaim the Good News
For all creation is called to live in God,
Transformed in Christ as Son.
And so we join the Messengers of God
The saints and all people of good will
And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated.
– Pope Francis Laudato Si #12



Divinisation

Early church communities delved into the mystery of how creation is divinised by the grace of God. They saw in an outreach of love that God's own self is poured out in creation. They dealt with the error of pantheists who believed that nature itself was God: God is in all things but not identified with them. Humans cannot be divine but in Jesus, both human and divine, all creation is drawn into God. This belief has multiple impacts: deep respect for an evolving universe and all it supports; awe and thanksgiving that humans are invited to free and conscious participation; love of earth and its diverse creatures on land and sea; compassion when hearing the twin cries of suffering arising from people and earth. Orthodox churches hold this belief dearly. The Assumption of Mary exemplifies Divinisation.

Evolution

Arising in biological studies, evolutionary analysis has expanded human knowledge. The process explained by evolution gives tools to fields of knowledge beyond biology. Geology and history studies, theology and church teachings have benefitted. Cardinal John Henry Newman, two centuries ago, explored how the church has found better ways to teach and express the Gospel message. This was behind Pope John XXIII calling the Second Vatican Council – go back to the sources, he said, and renew pastoral practices to bring the church into modern times. Read the signs of the times became a motto. Belief can never be frozen in any one time.

We are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion.
– Pope Francis Laudato Si #220

7. PENTECOST SUNDAY

Spirit Abides in Us to the End of Time

Grace and Social Aspects to Celebrate

Today's Scripture assures us that the gifts of the Holy Spirit live in us until the end of time. The human journey can be long, but when Christian communities proclaim the Good News, the Spirit is actively present in our words and deeds, drawing us along life's twists and turns to see God face to face.

Scriptural Phrases

Acts 2:1–11; Ps 104; 1 Cor 12:3b–7, 12–13; Jn 20:19–23

Pentecost, disciples in one place together.

Suddenly a noise like a strong driving wind appeared to them as tongues of fire

they were all filled with the Holy Spirit

began to speak in different tongues

as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Devout Jews from every nation in Jerusalem

each one heard them in his own language

about the mighty acts of God.

Lord, send out your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth

take away their breath, they perish.

Say, Jesus is Lord, by the Spirit

different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit

different service but the same Lord

different workings but the same God

A body is one though it has many parts

one Spirit all baptized into one body

Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,

all given to drink of one Spirit.

First day of the week

Jesus came and stood in their midst

said to them, Peace be with you

showed them his hands and his side.

As the Father sent me, so I send you

breathed on them, receive the Holy Spirit

whose sins you forgive are forgiven.

Thomas not with them when Jesus came.

unless I see the mark of nails, not believe



Jesus came again, Peace be with you

Thomas, put your hand into my side,

do not be unbelieving, but believe.

My Lord and my God

blessed have not seen and believed.

Jesus did many other signs not written

these are written that you may believe

so you may have life in his name.

Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. God active – God promises to journey with us to the end of time. That we call on God to guide us and give us the courage to make decisions of integrity, for our personal and work life. We pray ...
2. Earth sustains – God has designed earth's systems to sustain life. That we respect every form of life, from the smallest organism to the human, caring for life as God's gift. We pray ...
3. An Encouraging Community – The Son of God called together the Twelve. That we work with the Spirit of Jesus calling us to practical ways of nourishing our faith community. We pray ...
4. Empowering Spirit – God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That we learn about the seven gifts of the Spirit and not be afraid to use them to empower our decisions and actions. We pray ...
5. Unequal and Unfair – God knows the trials of every creature. That we be sensitive to inequality and unfairness in our society and willingly stand to correct their injustice. We pray ...



Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
And his Spirit abiding in our community.
The Holy Spirit works in us always.
The followers of Jesus
Go into the world's twists and turns,
proclaiming Good News in word and deed
drawing all to see God face to face.
And so we join the Messengers of God
The saints and all people of good will
And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

The life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body, nature or worldly realities but lived in communion with all that surrounds us.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #216



Seven Gifts

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in Is 11:1-2 are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (or spirit of godliness). Many lists in Christian devotion use the number seven as a sign of fullness. Images of doves often represented the gifts of the Spirit in medieval texts, such as in the Tree of Jesse. They express the gifts given in Baptism and completed in Confirmation. St Thomas Aquinas says that four of these gifts help the intellect (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel); the other three strengthen the will. Each gift leads and empowers our journey towards God.

Remembering History

Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it is a statement attributed to Winston Churchill. On the positive side, we can be inspired by history. Learning about how the Holy Spirit formed early church communities helps us imagine new ways for our communities. We are challenged not only to form post-Vatican II but 21st century church communities. We have the gifts of the Spirit to go into the world and engage in its realities, just as Jesus told his disciples to do. We go as women and men, poor and rich, uneducated and academic, owner and unionist, student and teacher, disabled and healthy, slow and brilliant. Believers kick up the dust and sniff out the Holy Spirit at work.

The mystery of authentic human existence - life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity.

– Pope Francis Fratelli Tutti # 87

8. THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

One God Manifest in Three Relationships

Grace to Celebrate

Today we celebrate that we are created to become one with the very nature of God. Throughout history, people have found God in multiple ways: in awe of cosmic and natural complexities; in love experienced in family and friends; in carers and wise leaders; in artists and philosophers. The Holy Spirit actively works to lead all creation to enter the very life of God.

Scriptural Phrases

Ex 34:4b–6, 8–9; Dn 3:52; 2 Cor 13:11–13;

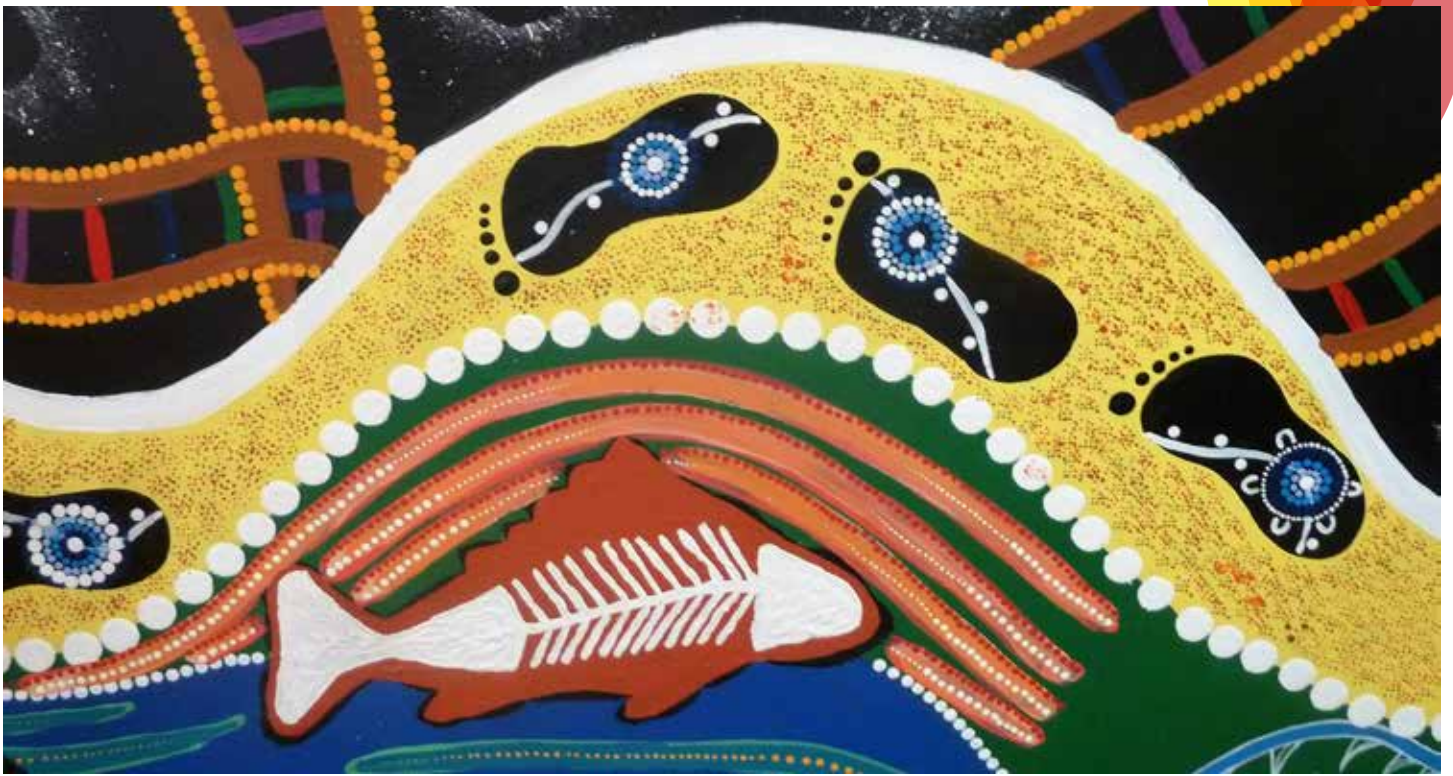
Jn 3:16–18

*Moses went up Mount Sinai
taking along the two stone tablets.
God stood with Moses there
and proclaimed his name
God, a merciful and gracious God
slow to anger and rich in kindness
Moses bowed down in worship.
Lord come along in our company
pardon a stiff-necked people
and receive us as your own.
Blessed be the God of our fathers
blessed is your holy name.
Rejoice, mend your ways
encourage one another, live in peace.
God of love and peace will be with you
greet one another with a holy kiss.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God and the
fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
God so loved the world to give the only Son
so believe in him and have eternal life.
God did not send his Son to condemn the world
but that the world might be saved.
Believe in the name of the only Son of God.*



Intercessions – Prayers of the Faithful

1. Relationships – God is a Trinity of Loving Relationships. That we put love at the centre of our lives, as individuals, as of believers, and as members of society. We pray ...
2. Earth and Cosmos – God created a wondrous universe over billions of years. That we thank the scientists who continually open earth's mysteries, grateful for new reasons to thank the Creator. We pray ...
3. One Human Family – God made all peoples as a family. That we see people of every race as sisters and brothers, accepting their right to grow into the fullness of their humanity. We pray ...
4. The Breath of God – God's Spirit is at work in every place and time. That we look for the signs of the God's action in the world's often tragic and unjust events, searching for ways of peace. We pray ...
5. Human Desires – God knows the human heart. That we be honest with God in our prayer, unafraid to express anger and disappointment, but ask the Spirit to heal and carry us forward. We pray ...



Prayer of Thanksgiving

God in whom we live, move and have our being,
 It is right to give you thanks in Christ Jesus
 And his Spirit abiding in our community.
 The Holy Spirit leads all creation
 into a deep relationship with God.
 The historical yearnings of every age
 finds personal and communal peace
 in the unfathomable love and life of God.
 And so we join the Messengers of God
 The saints and all people of good will
 And earth itself as we say, Holy, Holy ...

Trinity Embodies Love

Seeing the One God as a Trinity of Persons is unique to Christian belief. Over millennia, theologians have struggled to express ideas on the Trinity and all end by saying their efforts limp before the mystery. The actions of God are diverse, often expressed as Creator, Sanctifier and Sustainer – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each way sets up a personal relationship with God. As Creator alone, God might be terrifyingly remote. As Saviour alone, God might be just a hero. As Spirit alone, God might seem like a personal genie. The internal relationships within God are the source of all right relationships. Love leads the Father to parent a Son, and the love between them brings forth the Spirit. Whatever the theology, the one God is Love and relates through love.

Everything is interconnected. Develop a spirituality of global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #240

Assisted Evolution

Australian scientists are leading global research into assisted evolution. Working on ways to preserve local reef systems has led them to design actions that assist a reef's ecological processes. Their dedication springs from a love for the beauty and complexity of life that the reef supports. They harness their anger about ocean pollution and speeding climate change to design processes to mitigate the impacts of human vandalism. One technique creates islands of diversity that seed recovery while campaigning to create wide social awareness of hope in human-reef relationships. Young believers might proclaim a New Heaven and New Earth by choosing a career in assisted evolution or other scientific works of hope.

God as trinitarian communion has left its mark on all creation.

– Pope Francis Laudato Si #239



Veni, Sancte Spiritus (Come Holy Spirit)

*Come, Holy Spirit, come
Shed a ray of light divine
Come, carer of the poor
Come, source of all our store.
Come, You of comforters the best
You, the soul's most welcome guest
Refreshment in our labour, rest most sweet
Grateful coolness in the heat
Most blessed Light divine
Shine within these hearts of yours
Where you are not, we have naught
Heal our wounds, our strength renew
On our dryness, pour your dew
Bend the stubborn heart and will
Melt the frozen, warm the chill
Guide the steps that go astray
In your sevenfold gift descend
Give them joys that never end.
Amen.*