

2023 EASTER REFLECTION BOOKLET | YEAR A

The Word The Life of the World

Pentecost Sunday

Promise Fulfilled in the Word



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Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your amazing love. A love that flowed from the Holy Spirit's most generous gift. How wonderful is Your love in providing us with Your sublime presence. We learn from the scriptures that great and wonderful things happened in the lives of the faithful under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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We take this moment to acknowledge that we cannot accomplish anything so great and wonderful without the same inspiration that they received from the Holy Spirit. Your Word and the Holy Spirit are our only sources of illumination as we journey towards You. We make this prayer through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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Readings

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1st Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

The upper room, a place that is away from the rest of the household and away from the sight of the public is where empowerment will take place. One can only marvel at the thought of how God our Father, in His omnipresence and omniscience, still cares about each one of His children and sends down the Holy Spirit into their hearts.

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Today for some, this may happen to a lesser degree in life-changing encounters or miracles. For others, it may just be through a simple, everyday encounter with a kind-hearted soul. His promise to us (Acts 2:39) is certain and concrete—that if we keep Him in our hearts, He will speak through each one of His children.

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2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13

This reading reminds us that we are all parts of One Body—the Church—and that each of us has been created uniquely in the image and likeness of God our Father. He has showered us with gifts to help fulfil His mission on earth, and that discerning our mission will be a constant struggle until we encounter the Holy Spirit and have those gifts awakened within us.

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Once the Spirit has been enflamed within our hearts, we must seek out a community in which to practice those gifts and find ways to collaborate, no matter how difficult it may be, toward a communion of communities. Perhaps this is why God our Father has given each of us unique gifts and talents, so that we can use them for the common good in a community of brothers and sisters.

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Gospel: John 20:19-23

As with the first reading, this passage evokes a powerful image of the disciples huddling in fear, anxiety, and despair. Then, when Jesus appears and breathes on them, it is a transformative encounter; the result of that 'Christ encounter' is a radical change in the disciples. There is a fearlessness that allows them to go out and preach in His name (2 Tim 1:7; Isa 41:13), at the same time forgiving those whose sins they choose to forgive.

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In essence, Jesus gives them the same power He has over sin, an authority that comes from no one other than God our Father. So, by putting our faith in Jesus alone, we are submitting to the will of our Father, who gives us the same power over sin that He gave to His Son, our Saviour.

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Reflections

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The readings for today provide us with very powerful messages of hope in God's providence, and how He cares for us deeply enough to send the Holy Spirit into our presence. The coming of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost is the turning point for the Church where the disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit and begin preaching in a language that everyone seems to understand (Acts 2:4-7).

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Not only that, but the Spirit also brings with it a whole host of gifts for the disciples and for each one of us now, who are baptised—gifts which are meant for the work of God (1 Cor 12:4-7). This is regardless of our nationality, our state of being, our present circumstances; God gives to each one of us a gift which is meant for us to exercise in service to His name. How generous is God our Father, showering us with gifts which we do not ask for, to demonstrate His love for us and to assure us that He is with us always.

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Acknowledging and using the gifts we receive is one way to express our gratitude to our loving Father—not that He asks for it. By using our gifts for the benefit of our community, we may be able to meet other brothers and sisters on our faith journey who have been similarly touched. As a result, one will begin to recognise the power of the Holy Spirit in the community and how being a part of a praying community is one of the fruits of being open to our Father's graces.

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If we were to put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples, huddled fearfully in the upper room, perhaps we could draw a parallel to some of the current situations we face in life today—the fear of losing a job, the anxiety of having to sit for exams, perhaps even a fear of catching a deadly disease. There are many who live in fear and anxiety, worry and despair. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, He came to cast out all fear and anxiety (1 John 4:18), and as St. Paul states in 2 Tim 1:7, “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”

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Thus, we can be assured that on this feast day, we are blessed with a power that transforms us and those around us. If all of us believe today, that the Spirit comes down upon each one of us, then all it takes is for us to open our hearts in humility.



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Sharing Questions

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Personal Reflection & Sharing Questions

What struck you from the passages of scripture?

What stirs your heart? Remain with it for a while.

- The Holy Spirit came with gifts. Which of these gifts are alive in you today?
- How do you intend to use these gifts given by the Holy Spirit to you?

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Sharing Questions

For Small Christian Communities

- Is your community open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? How has the community done this?
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to the community at this meeting?

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Sharing Questions

For Ministry

- How does the ministry discern the movement of the Holy Spirit?
- If we are not doing the work of the Holy Spirit, then what is the ministry doing?

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Sharing Questions

For Family

- How does the family spend time together to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the family?
- How can we better witness to the glory of the Word in our family life?

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Take home

For His promise to be experienced in us, we must live with the Easter joy, peace and hope.

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Doing your bit

Invite the person that you have been in touch with for the past few weeks to the Eucharistic celebration and introduce the person to some members of the community.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, the message of hope in Your providence is very clear and powerful. You show Your care for us by sending us the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging this gift of the Holy Spirit, we act out the inspirations that flow from His promptings. We are blessed with His power that transforms our lives and those around us. Out of gratitude for Your love, we want to reach out to others with this Gift so that they too may be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk in Your ways. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.