

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PENTECOST

Jesus told his Apostles on several occasions that he was leaving them in order to send to them a mysterious Person to help and teach them. He called this person the 'Spirit of Truth' and the 'Counsellor'.

On the day he ascended into Heaven he told them to wait in Jerusalem for the fulfilment of this promise. The great event took place ten days later, on the Jewish festival called Pentecost. It is thus reported in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,

Pentecost (*Acts 2, 14*).

The mighty wind blowing round the house and the tongues as of fire were signs of the Spirit of God, powerful and ardent, bringing strength and blessing to the whole of Creation and particularly to the Church of Christ.

A sudden change came over the Apostles. They who had fled and been full of doubts and fears when Christ was arrested now became strong and bold as lions. They were now ready and eager to preach the gospel, to proclaim the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The city at that time was full of people come from many countries for the religious celebrations. Attracted by 'the sound of a mighty wind' they began to gather around the Apostles. They were amazed to hear the Apostles speaking the languages of the various nationalities present.

St Peter, with the eleven other Apostles at his side, then preached powerfully, declaring that Jesus was the Saviour of the world promised by the prophets of old. The effects of this preaching were astonishing. After St Peter's great sermon many came to him eagerly and asked: 'What shall we do?' He replied: 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.' Three thousand were baptised that day. The Acts of the Apostles tells how day by day the numbers of the Christians grew.

This amazing success was due to the fact that the Spirit promised by Christ had come down upon his followers to remain with them always. This Holy Spirit is a mystery far beyond the grasp of the human mind, but the Bible tells us much about the Spirit, a divine breath that gives life to the world and wisdom to the minds of men and women.

The Apostles, and those they ordained to help them in teaching the Gospel, were absolutely convinced that they spoke and acted under the driving force and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Reading the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, one feels the enthusiasm and excitement of those first years when thousands were converted. The Holy Spirit acted so strongly upon them that he seemed to have been 'poured out,' as was foretold by the prophet Joel.

The Spirit then is God giving true wisdom to Christians in the Church of Christ.

In short, the Spirit is God's life, energy, power, vigour for action, wisdom, fire of emotion, God's tender and strong love. The Spirit acts in the people in whom this Spirit dwells, making them live the life of God more fully, The Spirit acts upon their intellects, so that they know the truth of Christ better and make sound judgements. The Spirit acts on their wills, so that they are strong in the resolve to do good, and acts on their hearts and emotions, so that they love generously and bravely.

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