



DAY OF PENTECOST

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1-21

OR Numbers 11:24-30, following

A reading from Acts.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come,
[the apostles] were all together in one place.

²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound
like the rush of a violent wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,
and a tongue rested on each of them.

⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven
living in Jerusalem.

⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,
because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked,
“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”

⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites,
and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene,
and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—
in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”

¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another,
“What does this mean?”

¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them,
“Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem,
let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose,
for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.

FIRST READING (Acts) *Mesopotamia = mes-oh-poh-TAY-mee-uh* *Cappadocia = kap-uh-DOH-shee-uh* *Phrygia = FRU-yuh* *Pamphylia = pam-FIL-yuh* *Cyrene = sy-REE-neh*

This reading provides two distinct and significant challenges for the reader. The most apparent is the list of less-than-familiar cities and regions. The other is the overwhelming noise that fills the entire house. The story demands more energy and volume than most. It will also be helped if the reader is so utterly confident in the pronunciations that the geographic sites can tumble out in something of an ecstatic rush. Also, note that the word *prophesy* in verse 17 is a verb and pronounced “PROF-uh-sigh.” Mispronunciations will immediately ruin a reading by focusing the hearer’s attention on the reader rather than on what is being read.

¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'”

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

OR: Numbers 11:24-30

A reading from Numbers.

²⁴Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD,
and he gathered seventy of the elders of the people
and placed them all around the tent.

²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him
and took some of the spirit that was on him
and put it on the seventy elders,
and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.
But they did not do so again.

²⁶Two men remained in the camp,
one named Eldad and the other named Medad,
and the spirit rested on them;
they were among those registered,
but they had not gone out to the tent,
so they prophesied in the camp.

²⁷And a young man ran and told Moses,
“Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”

²⁸And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said,
“My lord Moses, stop them!” ▶

FIRST READING (Numbers) *Eldad = EL-dad Medad = MEE-dad*

Toward the end of verse 25, the word *once* is implied, but not present: “. . . they prophesied [once].” Because of its absence, a healthy pause before reading “But they did not do so again” is essential if verse 25 is to make sense to the hearer. Allow the whole text to celebrate the Spirit’s inspiration of the prophets.

²⁹But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets
and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!”
³⁰And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

PSALMODY: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

OR Acts 2:1-21, following

A reading from First Corinthians.

^{3b}No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit,
⁵and there are varieties of services but the same Lord,
⁶and there are varieties of activities,
but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom
and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,
⁹to another faith by the same Spirit,
to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
¹⁰to another the working of powerful deeds,
to another prophecy,
to another the discernment of spirits,
to another various kinds of tongues,
to another the interpretation of tongues.
¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,
who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members,
and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,
so it is with Christ.

¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—
Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians) *prophecy = PROF-uh-see*

This is a word of enormous encouragement to every baptized person. It requires a sense of energy and joy—but an instructive pace (not too fast) with careful attention to diction. Take a close look and work carefully at verses 8-10 and verse 12. This text will take some time for the hearer to absorb. Finally notice that here the word *prophecy* is the noun, not the verb as in the Acts reading. Mispronunciation will stop the reading cold!

OR: Acts 2:1-21

¹When the day of Pentecost had come,
[the apostles] were all together in one place.

²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound
like the rush of a violent wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,
and a tongue rested on each of them.

⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven
living in Jerusalem.

⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered,
because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked,
“Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”

⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites,
and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene,
and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—
in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”

¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another,
“What does this mean?”

¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them,
“Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem,
let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose,
for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ▶

SECOND READING (Acts)

See notes for the first reading from Acts.

¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit,
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'”

Word of God, word of life. *or* The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: John 20:19-23

OR John 7:37-39, following

The holy gospel according to John.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week,
and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit.

²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;
if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL (John 20)

The heart of this little story (when read on Pentecost) is found in the odd little phrase “he breathed on them.” A penetrating reading of the text will require some consideration of how one might illuminate or illustrate this “lighting of the Spirit of God” in the articulation of that phrase. So as not to rush the reading, allow each sentence to “stand alone.” Each period deserves a substantive pause.

OR: John 7:37-39

The holy gospel according to John.

³⁷On the last day of the festival ^{of Booths,} the great day,
while Jesus was standing ^{in the temple,} he cried out,

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me,

³⁸and 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.’”

³⁹Now he said this about the Spirit,

which believers in him were to receive,

for as yet there was no Spirit

because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL (John 7)

This awkward little reading celebrates—by allusion to its absence!—the gift of the Spirit of God. It merits prayerful pondering, perhaps consultation of a commentary, and a deliberate delivery seasoned with a smidge of mystery.