



ABOUT THE PROPERS

An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service



The Coming of the Holy Spirit The Day of Pentecost May 23, 2021



The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Fifty days after the Passover, God's Old Testament people Israel would celebrate the gathering of the harvest at the *Festival of Weeks*. At the celebration fifty days after Christ's resurrection, God sent the promised Counselor on the day we call "Pentecost" (Greek for "the fiftieth (day)"). This outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked the birthday of the New Testament Church and Christians today continue to mark it as they celebrate the harvest of souls won by the Son and gathered by the Spirit.

The Propers

The Propers are those portions of the service that change (or, are "proper" to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin ordo, which means "regular order") portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord's Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.

First Lesson ¹

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The breath of God is active and life-giving where the Word is proclaimed exactly as he gave it. Ezekiel preaches only what God told him to preach, even when preaching to dry bones. The whole of humanity is nothing but dry bones until God breathes his Word on them. He does it still when and where *his* Word is proclaimed and not apart from it. To say that the Spirit is active and to say that his Word is powerful is to say the same thing. He breathed at creation and brought all things into existence. He breathes in the gospel and conquered our spiritual death, bringing us to Jesus and Jesus to us. On the last day he will breathe again and wake all the dead and take us to be with God in heaven forever. Where should we expect to experience the breath of God? Nowhere else than where his Word is that is in the church as she breathes his Word in all its truth and purity! Everywhere else God sees only bones that stay dry and dead!

Second Lesson ¹

Acts 2:1-21

The breath of God is both violent and gentle. Its violence is in the mighty wind. It is in the signs and wonders that he will speak into being to accompany the end of the age, prefigured by the mighty wind on this day. His violent breath however does not create faith. It creates curiosity this day, and one day will inspire dread in those who have not listened to his gentle voice in the gospel. It is when he breathes words through his apostles and prophets that he is most mighty *for us*. For then he creates faith which calls on the Name of the Lord, the Savior. That is the Spirit's real work and glory, bringing us to trust in Jesus for our salvation. Fear is gone and replaced with joyful confidence wrought by the Spirit in the gospel.

Gospel of the Day ¹

John 14:25-27

The Spirit comes forth from the Father and the Son. He is the one called to be at our side. He is the breath of God whose holy work makes us holy by teaching us his Word and thus bringing Christ to us and us to Christ. In revealing Christ he brings forgiveness and eternal life, all that Christ has won for us. For when he reminds us of what Christ said and did for us, Christ comes to impart peace with God and with our own conscience. As St. Bernard said, the Word is the kiss of God on the lips of the soul. Therefore we fearlessly face what is ahead, for we face it with the Father's gift of the Spirit and with the Spirit's gift of the Christ's continuing presence.

Psalm of the Day

Psalm 51b

“Take not your Holy Spirit from me.” We continue to pray that the Holy Spirit comes to us to strengthen our faith and guide us in holy living.

Verse of the Day

“Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.” (*From the antiphon: Come, Holy Spirit*)

Prayer of the Day

Holy Spirit, God and Lord, come to us this joyful day with your sevenfold gift of grace. Rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love that in a true and living faith we may tell abroad the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father, one God, now and forever.

Hymn of the Day

176 “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord” (German hymn, 15th cent; Martin Luther, 1483-1546)

Church Year Season ¹

Sundays after Pentecost

After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to grow the faith of believers. The appointed lessons teach us the characteristics of the Holy Ministry, the Christian, the Church, our God, and the Christian life.

Colors & Symbolism

The Day of Pentecost: Red

Red, the color of fire, is the color for the Festival of Pentecost. It signifies the appearance of what looked like tongues of fire over them when the Holy Spirit descended at the first Pentecost. The color red is also used for festivals of renewal in the Holy Spirit, such as Reformation, missions, and ordination. The color also reminds us of the blood of the martyrs – the believers of every generation who by the power of the Holy Spirit hold firm to the true faith even at the cost of their lives.

Main Paraments

Pentecost Sunday

Superfrontal: The Holy Spirit is often represented as a dove, recalling Jesus’ baptism when the Spirit descended from heaven “like a dove” (Matthew 3:16). The dove also reminds us of the Coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, when the apostles were baptized with the Spirit and with fire. The flames represent the tongues of fire that rested on the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday as they were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). To the left and right are the letters *Alpha* (Α) and *Omega* (Ω), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These two letters symbolize Jesus Christ, our eternal Lord and Savior, who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13).

Lectern antependium: The shell with drops of water represents Holy Baptism. Ancient pictures of Jesus’ baptism show John the Baptist pouring water from a shell upon Jesus’ head as he stood in the waters of the Jordan River. Nothing in the Bible is said about John using a shell to apply water on Jesus, but the picture of a shell has long since been used in the Church to symbolize this sacrament of initiation into God’s Church. In some churches today baptisms are performed by pouring water from a shell.

Pulpit antependium: The book in front of the cross represents God’s Word in the Holy Bible. The main content of Holy Scripture is the good news of forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus Christ, our Savior (John 20:31; 1Corinthians 1:23). The significance of the Greek letters *Alpha* (Α) and *Omega* (Ω) is explained above in the description of the superfrontal.

[The significance of the crosses on the lectern and pulpit antependium is explained below]

The Cross is the most recognizable symbol for Jesus, his Church, his sacrificial death, and his victory over sin and death. The apostle St. Paul used the image of the cross as a way to sum up the Gospel of God’s saving work through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18; Galatians 6:14). On the cross, God’s Son suffered and died to pay for the sins of the world. By God’s grace and through faith, we are cleansed by Christ’s blood (Hebrews 10:10).

¹ Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.
Clipart courtesy of “Ecclesiastical Art by Ed Riojas”