

Contexts

John's Gospel – in brief

- **Structure of John's Gospel**

1:1-18: Prologue – An introduction to and summary of the career of the incarnate Word.

1:19-12:50: Part One: The Book of Signs: the Word reveals himself to the world and to his own, but they do not accept him.

Chapter 6 – Jesus, the Bread of Life is right in the middle of The Book of Signs – a central text in more ways than one!

13:1-20:31: Part Two: The Book of Glory: To those who accept him, the Word shows his glory by returning to the Father in death, resurrection and ascension.

Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of life.

21:1-25: Epilogue: Galilean resurrection appearances and second conclusion.

- It is the only Gospel to call Jesus "God".
- Purpose of Gospel is so that those who follow Jesus might have the kind of faith that would give them eternal life, namely, the faith that Jesus was God's only Son, possessing God's own life and had come into the world from above that people might be given that life (and thus be begotten by God) and become God's children. (Raymond Brown SS)
- Jesus is 'The Bread of Life' who feeds, nourishes and sustains the children of God.

John 15:26-27; 16:12-15 – things to notice

- In John's Gospel the Spirit is given and the disciples are commissioned on the day of Jesus' resurrection.
- Begins with 2 verses from Chapter 15 and then continues with several verses from Chapter 16 – those parts which speak about the Spirit.
- Jesus will send the Spirit from the Father. The Spirit is the spirit of truth who comes from the father. Truth about what? About Jesus, about who God is?
- The Spirit will be a witness to Jesus and will make the disciples witnesses also to him.
- Jesus still has many things to say to the disciples, but now it will be the Spirit who will gradually teach/form the disciples.
- Another reference to the Spirit who is truth and who speaks the truth – the complete truth.
- Once again, typical of John, everything is linked to and enfolded in the life of the Father.
- 'He will tell you of the things to come' – unclear, but not about some psychic knowledge of the future. More in the sense of other parts of John's Gospel about Jesus as the full revelation of God. In this sense, it is the Spirit who will guide the community in its ongoing understanding of Jesus and in making the things Jesus said and did intelligible to them.
- The Spirit glorifies Jesus by witnessing to the truth and confirming the words and teaching of Jesus (since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine.)
- Everything the Father has is mine.... – everything Jesus has and speaks he shares with the Father. Another typical Johannine insistence on the unity between Father and Son, celebrated and glorified by the Spirit's witness to the truth about God which Jesus speaks.

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

At Pentecost we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the first group of Christian believers - the disciples. This gift of the Holy Spirit is the culmination of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the enduring way in which Jesus remains present in the Church and in the life of each person – even if we are not aware of it.

It would be wrong to think that this gift happened only once, in one moment of history. In fact, the gifting of the Holy Spirit is a continuing event in the life of every believing person and, therefore, in every age of human history.

It would also be wrong to pray on Pentecost Sunday that we, too, may receive the Spirit – as though we had not already received the Spirit whose presence in us is proclaimed ritually in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. So we do not pray to receive the Spirit, but rather, to grow more aware of the Spirit's presence in our lives and to allow that Spirit to grow within us, gradually re-shaping our minds and hearts in the image of Jesus.

So, today we are also celebrating the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

Pentecost brings to a close the fifty days of the Church's Easter celebrations. Soon we will begin Ordinary (Ordered) Time again. So, our feast today helps us understand that we take the Holy Spirit with us into the ordinary events and tasks of each day. That is how we allow the sacred to touch, heal and transform us and the world around us.

The first reading is St Luke's account of the first experience of the Holy Spirit by the disciples. The Spirit so unites the disciples that they speak with one voice, in one language of faith and love.

In the second reading from the Letter to the Corinthians St Paul says that the Spirit brings a variety of gifts and all gifts are meant to build up the body of Christ. He uses the analogy of the human body to talk about the new body of Christ formed by those who hear the Spirit. This Spirit brings unity in diversity.

The Holy Spirit keeps us in the deep communion of love with God and Christ. The spiritual search is for the heart of God within our own. When we enter into relationship with Christ through the Spirit, the gifts begin to flow more abundantly. The Spirit is the source of reconciliation with ourselves and with each other. Reconciliation is essential if we are to 'hold and guard' each other.

The Spirit brings gifts of wisdom, courage, understanding, right judgement, knowledge, reverence, wonder and awe in God's presence. May we be graced by them all as we discern and decide how we can best work together to build up each other and to let God's love be seen at work in each of us.