

**GOSPEL***John 20:19-23*

In the evening of the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me,  
so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.  
For those whose sins you forgive,  
they are forgiven;  
for those whose sins you retain,  
they are retained.'

**REFLECTION OF POPE BENEDICT XVI***23 May 2010*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Fifty days after Easter we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, in which we recall the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, who as wind and as fire descended upon the Apostles gathered together in the Upper Room, and enabled them to preach the Gospel to all nations with courage (cf. Acts 2: 1-13). The mystery of Pentecost, which we rightly identify with the event of the Church's true "baptism", is not, however, exhausted by this. The Church in fact lives constantly from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, without which she would exhaust her own strength, like a sailboat without the wind. Pentecost is renewed in a special way in certain powerful moments, whether this be at the local or the universal level, whether it be in small assemblies or in large ones. The Councils, for example, had sessions graced by special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and among these is certainly the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. We might also recall that famous meeting of the ecclesial movements with Venerable John Paul II, here in St Peter's Square, precisely on Pentecost in 1998. But the Church knows countless "pentecosts"

that vivify the local communities. Let us think of the liturgies, particularly those experienced in special moments of the community's life, in which the power of God is perceived in an evident way, infusing joy and enthusiasm in hearts. We may think of many other prayer gatherings in which young people clearly feel the call of God to root their lives in his love, even consecrating themselves entirely to him.

Thus there is no Church without Pentecost. And I would like to add that there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary. This is how it was at the beginning, in the Upper Room, where the disciples "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren", as the Acts of the Apostles says (1: 14). And this is how it always is, in every place and in every time. I witnessed it a short time ago at Fatima. What did that great multitude on the square in front of the Shrine experience, where we were truly all of one heart and one soul? It was a renewed Pentecost. In our midst was Mary, the Mother of Jesus. This is the typical experience at the great Marian sanctuaries Lourdes, Guadalupe, Pompeii, Loreto or even in the smaller ones. Wherever Christians gather in prayer with Mary, the Lord grants his Spirit.

Dear friends, on this Feast of Pentecost, we too would like to be spiritually united with the Mother of Christ and of the Church, faithfully invoking a renewed outpouring of the Paraclete. We invoke this for the whole Church, in particular, in this Year for Priests, for all the ministers of the Gospel, that the message of salvation be proclaimed to all the nations.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel?



**Head:** Can you recall a moment in your faith journey where you experienced a "powerful moment" with the Holy Spirit? What happened?



**Heart:** Through the Holy Spirit, "God is perceived in an evident way, infusing joy and enthusiasm in hearts." Does this seem true to your experience? Why or why not?



**Hands:** Perhaps consider an extended time for the group to pray for each person individually that they would be renewed in the Holy Spirit. You might like to place a hand on the person's shoulder as you pray.

## PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.