

## THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

### Pentecost Sunday

Pentecost was the Jewish festival of the harvest celebrated fifty days after Passover, when the first fruits of the corn harvest were offered to the Lord. It was an important festival in the life of the Hebrew people. It was also a feast of pilgrimage when throngs would gather together in Jerusalem and in the Temple. In today's gospel reading from St. John, the Risen Jesus appears for the first time before his ten disciples.



*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."*

You may remember that in the creation story at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, God's Spirit is depicted as 'hovering' over the water of chaos and that later God creates a human being by breathing into him the Spirit of Life. In the Upper Room, therefore, on that first Easter Sunday, by 'breathing' the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, Jesus imitates God's act of creation in Genesis. In the Resurrection, the Spirit re-creates the band of disciples into the new people of God; the 'peace' of understanding, enthusiasm and joy shatters all barriers among them to make of them a community of hope and forgiveness.

The other great passage of Holy Scripture for today is from the Acts of the Apostles.

*When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*

St Luke, the writer of this passage, invokes the images of 'wind' and 'fire' which frequently occur in the Old Testament. God revealed his presence in fire (the pillar of fire in the wilderness which led the people to the Promised Land) and in wind (that swept the earth to make the waters of the great flood subside). Both the Hebrew word for wind and its Greek equivalent also mean 'life-giving breath'. Thus, through this life-giving breath, God confirms that the new people of God, the Church' has been created and empowered.

The feast of Pentecost celebrates the unseen, immeasurable presence of God in our lives and in our church – the Spirit that animates us to do the work of the Gospel of the Risen One, the Spirit that makes God's will our will, the Spirit of God living in us and transforming us so that we might bring his life and love to our broken world. God 'breathes' his Spirit into our souls that we may live his life and love; he ignites the 'fire' of his Spirit within our hearts and minds that we may seek God in all things in order to realize the coming of his reign.

### Prayer for Pentecost Sunday

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your Church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.