

LESSON 5: The Spirit and the Church

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost the Kingdom of God was opened to all who believe and the Church was established. [CCC 732]
2. The people welcomed the Word of God spoken by Peter and repented of their sins. This too was by the grace of the Holy Spirit who prepared them. [CCC737]
3. They were baptized and received the Holy Spirit. Immediately the people became a 'Church' (which means assembly/gathering of God's people). [CCC 751, 752.] The new Church:
 - Devoted themselves to the apostles teaching [WORD OF GOD]
 - Prayed together. [PRAYER]
 - Met together and 'broke bread' together. [FELLOWSHIP/EUCHARIST]
 - Bore witness to Christ through their lives of love and by proclaiming the Good News. This caused more and more people to join them. [WITNESS]
4. Thus the 'Joint Mission' of Jesus and the Spirit continued through the Church: More and more people came into communion with God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. [CCC732,737]
5. *St. Paul urges us to 'Live by the Spirit'. Like the new Church, we too must pray, listen to God's Word, meet together in fellowship (especially in the Eucharist) and be witnesses of the Good News by word and action. Thus we will bear much fruit for God. [CCC 739-741]*



REFERENCES: Acts 2:37-47. Galatians 5:25.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; Calendar.

ASSIGNMENT: For the next 3 months, keep a record of your progress on the calendar given.

I. STARTER:

The story is told of a man who was biking through a remote area in the countryside. Suddenly he came upon a strange sight: In the middle of the road, a farmer was pushing a brand new car loaded with fruit and vegetables. The man stopped to see if he could help.

"Have you run out of petrol?" "No, the tank is full!"

"Engine trouble?" "No. Everything is fine!"

"Have you got the key?" "Yes!" The farmer held up a shiny new key.

The man realized that the problem was not with the car, but with the man. He took the key from the man's hand and invited him to get into the car. He turned on the ignition and the engine started. Off they went down the road!

"This is great! It's magical! You're a magician!"

- This story is a bit unbelievable, but many of us behave exactly like the farmer. We receive the Holy Spirit, (we all have received him at baptism) but we still try to do everything with our own strength. We don't allow the Holy Spirit's power to move us forward.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- Let's look today at the first people to receive an outpouring of the Spirit. What did they do with the gift? *[Give out the handouts. The students read the passage again and write the story of what happened beneath the sketches using words directly from the Bible passage. Review the answers. The words may be different in different versions. Bring out:]*
 1. When they heard Peter's preaching they were 'cut to the heart' and asked, "What should we do?" (v37)
 - What did Peter tell them they needed to do? *[Repent and be baptized.]* What did he say would happen? *[Their sins would be forgiven and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.]*
 2. Those who welcomed the message were baptized. (v41)

- How many people were baptized that day? [*About 3000*] This is why some call it the ‘birthday of the Church’. The Church was instituted by Christ when he chose his apostles, but this was when it became openly established. (Like a baby who grows in the mother’s womb and then is born.)
- 3. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship. (v42a)
 - What do you think the apostles taught? [*All that Jesus taught them.*]
 - What does fellowship mean? [*For a Christian it means meeting as brothers and sisters to share our faith with each other.*] The Greek word is ‘koinonia’ or ‘communion’ and is also used for the Eucharist. At Mass we have fellowship with each other.
- 4. They met for the breaking of the bread and the prayers. (v42b)
 - What do you think ‘the breaking of the bread’ refers to? [*It refers to the Eucharist.*] This was the name first used by Christians.
- 5. All who believed were together and had all things in common. (v44)
 - What did this practically mean? [*They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute them to those in need.*] They really considered each other as family.
- 6. Day by day the Lord added to their number. (v47)
 - Why do you think more and more people kept joining the new church? [*Seeing the power of God, the unity and love of the Christians: their lives showed that God was alive in them.*] We read that they also spread the Good News of Jesus to others by speaking about him. They were WITNESSES of Christ.

Thus the Joint Mission of Jesus and the Spirit continued through the Church: More and more people came into communion with God: the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

- What does ‘Church’ mean? [*Assembly or gathering of God’s people.*]
- What was the mission of Jesus and the Spirit? [*To bring us into communion or closeness with God.*]

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAAYER:

- What about us? We have all received Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, just like those first converts. But do we live like they did? Do more and more people come to Jesus, seeing our lives?... Or are we like that farmer in the story? Do we try to push our lives with our own effort instead of living by the power of the Holy Spirit?

St. Paul says ‘Live by the Spirit!’ What does he mean? What are we to do in order to live by the Spirit? [*Distribute the calendars and explain the symbols. Students enter the words on the left. They also enter the dates of the coming month in the appropriate boxes.*]

- A seed needs certain things to grow and bear fruit. What are they? [*Sunlight, water and the care of a gardener who removes weeds, provides fertilizer, digs around the plant etc.*] Finally the plant has to break out of its skin and sprout and bear fruit. So too, as Christians we need:
 - **PRAYER:** Daily personal prayer is an essential way to allow God into your life. It is like exposing yourself to sunlight: God’s presence, his love and strength.
 - **GOD’S WORD.** If we read God’s Word daily we will begin to hear him speak to us and get to know him. God’s Word is like rain that waters the earth and causes life to spring out. (Isaiah 55: 10:11)
 - **FELLOWSHIP:** Mass is an important way to have fellowship or communion with other Christians. We can also attend prayer meetings or just pray with others. We receive and give each other help and encouragement to live our Christian life.
 - **WITNESSING:** By reaching out to others and by sharing our faith with them, we can be witnesses. This means we use both actions and words.

HOME ASSIGNMENT: ⇨ Read the handout. ⇨ For the next month, keep a record of your progress on the Calendar given. Bring the Calendar next year to share how you managed.