

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: The Spirit Comes

AIM:**TIME: 60minutes**

General: 1] To describe the events of Pentecost-

- a) The outward signs of an inner experience- wind, fire, gift of tongues;
- b) The effect on the disciples and on the spectators: joy, proclamation of the Good News and mass conversion.
- c) The Church is born.

Personal: To help the children believe that the Holy Spirit is in them and can do great things in them also.

To lead them to respond to the Spirit and yield to Him.

Texts used: Acts 2: 1 - 13; 14 - 21; 37 - 41.

I. STARTER: [10 minutes] [Memory Exercise]

Lets see if you can go back into your childhood for a few minutes: to when you were just 4 or 5 years old. Close your eyes and throw your mind back to Christmas time...picture the house you lived in...your other brothers and sisters, your grandmother ...think of Christmas preparations...making a crib and a star...decorations...all the stories you heard about Santa Claus... your innocent belief...maybe you wrote a letter to him...your excitement grew as you waited for Christmas morning...the great joy of opening your gift which you believed came from Santa's sack...Christmas Mass with everyone wishing each other...Maybe your experience of Christmas was different...Let your mind travel over those experiences for a while.

[After two minutes silence, encourage the students to share some little things they remember...]
Christmas Day was a day of great excitement and joy for us because we waited for so long for it.

II. DEVELOPMENT: [35 minutes]

Your experience is something like the story we are going to read today. Jesus had promised the disciples of Jesus a great gift. What gift? (*The Holy Spirit*)

Every day they met together and prayed, probably discussing with each other what the gift would be like and what would happen when it came. They had great faith in Jesus. (Just like you, as a child, believed the big-people's stories). They had seen Jesus die, and come back to life. Surely He would keep His promise! They must have been reading the Scriptures, specially the parts where God's Spirit was mentioned...If you are going to receive a gift, you would naturally be curious about it! It was in this atmosphere of excitement and expectation that the gift finally came. Was it as good as they expected? Lets read about it.

Read Acts 2:1-17.

[Distribute the handouts and ask the students to try and answer questions 1-5 on the right hand side of the paper. After they have finished, let them give their answers and bring out]

1. On which feast day did the Holy Spirit finally come? [*On the day of Pentecost.*] 'Pentecost' means 50th. This feast comes 50 days after the feast of the Passover, when Jesus was killed.
2. What were the outer signs to show that the Holy Spirit had come? [*Noise of wind, fire, speaking in foreign languages*]
3. Why do you think there were so many foreigners in Jerusalem? [*Pentecost was one of the 3 important festivals of the Jews. These foreigners were Jews who had come to celebrate this festival in Jerusalem*]
4. Why do you think some people said- 'They are drunk !'? [*The disciples must have been shouting and behaving in an unusual way. They could not think of any reason why they were behaving this way, so some of them gave this reason.*]
5. Who gave them the real reason for the noise? [*Peter*]

Peter went on to explain all about Jesus and His death and resurrection. Did the people accept the message and believe? How many believed? Lets find out-

Read: Acts 2:37–42. *[Students answer the next 2 questions in their handouts and these are reviewed]*

6. What did Peter ask the people to do? *[He asked them to turn away from their sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus]*
7. How many people joined the group that day? *[About 3000]*

Pentecost Day is now considered to be the birthday of the Church. Can you find some similarities between the birth of the Church and your own birth? Fill in the spaces in your handouts.

[After the students have written go over their answers and bring out:]

- 1] The disciples waited and prayed with Mary in the Upper Room. Your parents waited 9 months for you to be born.
- 2] Jesus had to suffer a lot before this great event could happen. Your mother had to go through labour pains before you were born.
- 3] Through repentance and Baptism the people moved out of the darkness of sin into God's kingdom of light! A baby moves from the dark womb to the world of light.
- 4] The apostles cared for the new Church by teaching, prayer, fellowship and the Eucharist. As a baby, your parents and others fed you and cared for you.
- 5] The Church grew bigger and bigger as more and more people joined it everyday. A baby grows very fast if he is well cared for.

PRAYER: *[15 minutes]*

[Create an atmosphere of prayer by sitting in a circle/ going to the chapel/ lighting candles around a cross etc.]

- Is Pentecost a one-upon-a-time story or is it one that happens again?
- Hands up those who would like the gift of the Holy Spirit!
- Has anyone over here already received this gift? *[Actually when we were baptised, every one of us received the Holy Spirit].*
- Then why is it that we can hardly feel his Presence ? *[Perhaps we have lost our child-like trust and faith. We don't eagerly wait for the Spirit or really expect Him to come. Perhaps our faith in Jesus is not very strong...]*

It doesn't really matter what the reason is. If you want the Holy Spirit to start moving in your life all you have to do is ask. After two years you will be receiving the Spirit in a special way at Confirmation. But even now, we can and must ask Him to move in us.

Sing an appropriate song like- 'Spirit of the Living God' or 'Spirit, Spirit of God'. You could ask the students to open their hands as a sign of openness. If they like, you could lay your hands on each one's head and pray for them to receive a fresh infilling of the Spirit. End with a joyful singing of - 'Thank-you, thank-you, Jesus... (2nd verse-Thank-you for your Spirit)

YOU WILL NEED:

Good News New Testaments; One handout per student