

Background Notes for Parents

About the Theme

Pentecost

In this theme the children learn about the gift of the Holy Spirit and serving as a way of life.

Easter Sunday is the beginning of the **Easter Season** which lasts for 50 days. The celebration of the **Ascension** and **Pentecost** completes the Easter story.

Ascension

Forty days after Easter, the Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection and told them that he was going back to his Father in heaven. Before Jesus leaves them, he gives his followers a mission. Jesus tells his disciples to be his witnesses. They are to "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to everyone." (Mark 16:15, 16)

The disciples cannot carry out their mission of spreading Jesus' message to the ends of the earth without help. Therefore, Jesus tells his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they receive power from God. This power is God's Holy Spirit, who Jesus says will come after he goes away. After Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

Pentecost

Pentecost (or 'Shavuot' as it is called in Hebrew) is a Greek word meaning 'fiftieth'. The Jewish 'feast of weeks' was held fifty days after the beginning of the grain harvest. It was a thanksgiving feast, celebrating the end of the harvest and commemorating the day God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jesus had told his disciples that it was important that they carry on his mission after he was gone. He promised he would give them the strength of his Spirit to do this. At Pentecost the Church celebrates Jesus fulfilling that promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide and help his disciples to understand all that he has taught them. It is celebrated 50 days (7 weeks) after Easter Sunday and brings the Easter season to an end.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost changed the frightened disciples into witnesses who could speak out with courage. The Holy Spirit strengthens the Church today in its mission to continue the work of Jesus and proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Christians are called each day to accept and live lives of joyful service through the power of the Spirit in their lives.

Christians believe that the Spirit of God is active in each person and, in a special way, in the community of believers, which is the Church. It is the work of the Spirit to help people to hear God's message and to live Jesus' way of service. The Feast of Pentecost is the celebration both of the gift of God's Holy Spirit and the trust God places in people to be witnesses in the world. It is sometimes called ***the birthday of the Church*** because, filled with courage given by the Holy Spirit, the disciples went out among the people and began spreading Jesus' message, thus marking the beginning of the Church.

Year 3

In the topic 'Energy' the children explore the energy of wind and fire. They learn about the first Pentecost when the promised gift of the Holy Spirit came to the disciples. The Spirit would give them the power to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and all over the world and would give them a new way of living. The children learn about the gifts of the Spirit which are given to Christians by the Holy Spirit so that they can help one another. These seven particular gifts should be used to help others.

Week 1: Talk to your child about all the things that you can use fire for: starting a car, cooking, light, warmth, making things, metal work, glass, firing pottery, for purifying etc. Talk about the qualities of fire – it warms, melts, cooks, burns, change liquids and solid substances. Fire gives us light.

Do the same with wind.

Help your child to make a flame and wind mobile using the template attached. They colour and then write their ideas on the flame/wind about

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| The sounds you hear | the smells you smell |
| The sights you see | the feelings you have |
| The difference it makes | the movement it makes |
| The warmth or cold it brings | the power of fire/wind |

Week 2: Share the story of Pentecost with your child

'When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong and powerful wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.'

There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking like this are Galileans! How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? We are from many different countries yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!" Amazed and confused, they kept asking one another, "What does this mean?" But others made fun of the believers, saying, "These people are drunk!"

Then Peter stood up with the apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd. "Fellow-Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. These people are not drunk, they are filled with God's Holy Spirit."

This is what the prophet Joel spoke about: God says: "I will pour out my Spirit on everyone and they will proclaim my message." Awe and wonder came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.'

Acts 2: 1-18, 43

Go back through the passage and help your child highlight all the words in the passage which describes people who are bursting with energy or have no energy. Your child can then retell the story using the storyboard template.

Week 3: On Pentecost day, God's Holy Spirit showered gifts upon the friends of Jesus, gifts which were different kinds of energy, gifts which transformed them. To help Christians live as followers of Jesus the Holy Spirit gives them different kinds of gifts so everyone can help one another. There are seven particular gifts, which are linked together and help people to lead good lives and make use of the gifts they have. These gifts should be used to help others.

Wisdom – that is the gift to be sensible and not to jump to conclusions but be thoughtful.

Understanding – enables people to be compassionate and to take time to find out and be able to appreciate what is happening.

Counsel – means using wisdom and understanding to come to a good decision about something.

Fortitude – there are times when everyone needs to be brave in standing up for what they believe to be right and holy.

Knowledge – without knowledge you cannot make right judgements or have an understanding. It takes practice to have true knowledge.

Piety – this is about reverence and respect for God, for one another and for oneself.

Fear of the Lord - this gift enables people to recognise the awe and wonder of God and be amazed by the love and goodness of God.

Help your child to think of ways that these gifts can be used each and every day in simple ways. Create a poster using the template or they can make their own. (The template uses easier language for the children.)

Week 4: Celebrate the story of Pentecost – what can you remember about the story? How does the Holy Spirit help us today?

Mission Together and CAFOD have Pentecost liturgies you can download and celebrate.

<https://missiontogether.org.uk/pentecost/>

<https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Pentecost-primary-resources>