



*Rivers of  
Living Water  
Day of  
Pentecost/Endowment  
Sunday*

*John 7:37–39 and Acts 2:1–21  
“In the last days, God says, I will pour  
out my Spirit on all people, . . . and  
everyone who calls on the name of the  
Lord will be saved.”*

*June 4, 2017*

## Thought for the Week

Scripture: Acts 2:1-11 • 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12,13 • John 20:19-23

As we all know so well from common experience, new words are constantly popping up in our English vocabulary; sometimes even old and well-known words take on new meaning as social customs change and grow.

One such word that has been around for ages is immigration. It refers to the travel of people from one place to another for a variety of reasons. Mostly, however, these folks travel to find freedom, peace and the opportunity to live together in a respectful human way.

Immigration has become a kind of “buzz-word” today at least in the political and social order. Because of the disorder that is taking place in the Middle East for instance, many people in those regions have been eager to come to the United States. Of course, a certain anxiety has also arisen in the minds of many, a fear regarding what these people may do to the foundations of our society. Many of those fears are unfounded, of course, but they are present nonetheless.

Of course, many of us are ourselves immigrants or the children of immigrants and we have pretty much been assimilated into the existing culture. Without doubt, immigrant people have enriched our present day society in ways too many to list.

One of those areas of life where we have been especially blessed is in faith or religion. Practically any church today can boast of perhaps three or four different cultural, religious groups present at Mass on any given Sunday. Happily, most parishes have accommodated these “newcomers” and welcome them into the larger family.

Let me now turn your attention briefly to the scriptures for the earnestness of Pentecost; it is also a story of immigration. The story from the Acts of the Apostles tells us that people from thirteen different countries speaking many different languages had all traveled to Jerusalem and gathered there with the apostles for a Jewish feast that occurred fifty days after Passover.

Peter and the other disciples immediately welcomed these newcomers and began to explain to them in Aramaic the good news of Jesus Christ. Amazingly, each of the different language groups heard the apostles speak in their own tongue. Peter immediately explained to them that this could only take place through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, here we have the first celebration of religious faith in terms of a multiplicity of cultures and languages that is obviously going on still today. For proof, take a look around in your own church this Sunday.

Pentecost, however, is not just a single celebration day in the church today. The spirit of Pentecost celebrated among Christians should bubble over into the life and culture of our world every single day. It's true, of course, that there's much turmoil going on in our country today regarding the admissions of immigrants from Middle Eastern countries.

Perhaps as members of Christ's original community, we should be asking how we could be an example of inclusion in our own limited places and settings. How can Pentecost be spread into the secular world in ways that are particular and personal to each of us? The Holy Spirit obviously must have had a long term plan in mind on that first Pentecost day when wind and fire inspired the early disciples to spread Christ's invitation to include others down through the endless ages.

So, we are left with the question: do we Christians in our churches in the year 2017 still experience a holy wind and fire in our bones? If so, what do we plan to do about it? The Holy Spirit is patiently waiting for an answer tailored to our own times.



## What is Pentecost?

For Christians, Pentecost is a holiday on which we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early followers of Jesus. Before the events of the first Pentecost, which came a few weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, there were followers of Jesus, but no movement that could be meaningfully called "the church." Thus, from an historical point of view, Pentecost is the day on which the church was started. This is also true from a spiritual perspective, since the Spirit brings the church into existence and enlivens it. Thus Pentecost is the church's birthday.

This name comes from an expression in Leviticus 23:16, which instructs people to count seven weeks or "fifty days" from the end of Passover to the beginning of the next holiday (*pentekonta hemeras* in the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture).

*Shavuot* was the second great feast in Israel's yearly cycle of holy days. It was originally a harvest festival (Exod 23:16), but, in time, turned into a day to commemorate the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. This day became especially significant for Christians because, seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus, during the Jewish celebration of Shavuot/Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon his first followers, thus empowering them for their mission and gathering them together as a church.

Those of us who hold positions of power in the church should examine our attitudes and actions. Are we encouraging all of God's people to minister through the power of the Spirit? Are we open to what the Spirit of God wants to do in our churches and communities through his empowered people? Or are we gatekeepers of the church who would even keep the Holy Spirit out of our carefully tended and controlled communities?

As a pastor, my role is to equip God's people for doing the ministry of Christ in the church and the world (Eph 4:11-12). Sometimes, however, we pastors are so concerned about our own administrative duties that we fall short of this central pastoral calling. Pentecost is a day for pastors and other church leaders to recommit to equipping and encouraging all Christians for their ministry. When we do this, the Holy Spirit will be free to use the Community of Christ for God's purposes in the world.