



## Pentecost – Happy Birthday to Us!

*Celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the Church! If possible, use a birthday cake as a focal point for this prayer service—without the more than 2,000 candles. Light one large candle on the cake to symbolize the presence of Jesus and his Spirit. Before you begin, ask participants to think of talents of their own that they can share with others. Explain that they will be called on to share these thoughts during the prayer service.*

**Leader 1:** Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful gathered here...

**All:** ...and kindle in them the fire of your love.

**Leader 2:** On Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers. The Spirit changed fearful men and women locked behind closed doors into brave bearers of the Good News of Jesus. About 3,000 persons were baptized on that very day.

**Leader 3:** From that day, the Church grew. Today it has more than a billion members. The Spirit is still active in the Church, working in the hearts and minds of faithful Christians, urging them to be gifts to one another and to the world. Name one person and explain how this person has been a gift to you.

*Each participant names one person and describes that person's gift.*

**Leader 3:** Each of us has a talent or a gift we can share in the Church. Perhaps it's a strong voice to add to the choir or an ability to serve in a soup kitchen and share a kind word with those who come for a meal. Maybe it's an ability to help young children learn new things about their faith and have fun at the same time. What gift can you offer the Church on its birthday?

*Each participant names one gift.*

**Leader 1:** Holy Spirit, you are the breath powering our voices when we speak up for others, settle arguments, convince someone to stop bullying, lift the spirits of the unhappy, and invite the lonely.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

**Leader 1:** Holy Spirit, you are the power that strengthens us to reach out our hands to help the poor.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

**Leader 1:** Holy Spirit, you move us to hurry to places where we are needed, to follow the rules in the games we play, to carry the load for someone who needs help, and to go the extra mile to live out the Good News of Jesus.

**All:** Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.

**Leader 2:** Jesus, on the day you went back to your Father, you said to your friends, "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). We know that this is your message to us as well. Thank you for sending your Spirit to help us.

*End by singing "Happy Birthday" and enjoying the birthday cake.*



## Feasts of Spring



### **The Annunciation – March 25**

On this day, we celebrate the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary to announce that God wanted her to be the mother of Jesus. If March 25 falls within Holy Week or Easter week, the feast is celebrated on the Monday after the octave, or eighth day, of Easter.

### **The Ascension – 7th Sunday of Easter or Forty Days After Easter**

This solemnity celebrates Jesus' return to the Father. As he leaves, he tells his followers to spread his message to all nations—a command he wants us to fulfill today. In most areas, this feast is observed on the Seventh Sunday of Easter. The archdioceses of Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Omaha, and Philadelphia have, however, retained the traditional Ascension Thursday, which is forty days after Easter and remains a Holy Day of Obligation.

### **The Visitation – May 31**

When Mary learned that her cousin Elizabeth was also expecting a child, she walked many miles to visit her. Elizabeth's child was John the Baptist.

### **Pentecost Sunday – Fifty Days After Easter**

On this day, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers, which changed fearful people into brave proclaimers of the message of the Risen Jesus. On this, the birthday of the Church, the disciples baptized 3,000 new Christians.

### **Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church – Monday After Pentecost**

We honor Mary as Jesus' mother and ours too.

### **The Most Holy Trinity – Sunday After Pentecost**

This feast honors the fact that there are Three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in One God. This truth was revealed to us by Jesus, but it is still called a mystery because our human minds are not capable of completely understanding the Holy Trinity.

### **The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*) – Sunday After Trinity Sunday**

This feast celebrates Jesus' presence with his people in the Holy Eucharist.

### **The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus – Friday After *Corpus Christi***

This solemnity celebrates the fact that Jesus loves us with the warmth and devotion of a human heart like ours. But, being divine as well as human, he is not limited in the love he extends to each of us.