

**RCIA**  
**Issues facing the Church Today**  
**and Ecumenism**  
**Session 26**

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**“Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”**

**(CCC # 1928)**

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## **Pentecost**

### ***What does it mean to You?***

#### **Pentecost**

Originally, this was the second feast in rank of the Jews, the celebration of thanksgiving for the harvest and the ending of Passover time (cf. Dt. 26: 1 – 11). Later it was a celebration of the giving of the law to Moses at Sinai (cf. Ex. 20). In Christian recognition, Pentecost is the feast celebrated 50 days after Easter or ten days after the Feast of the Ascension. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (Acts 2: 1 – 42), as foretold by Christ (Jn. 16:7). It marks the beginning of the active apostolic work and is hailed as the birthday of the Church, for it was through the coming of the Holy Spirit that the Church began to form the members of the new kingdom.

In carrying out the Christian tradition there was a transformation from the Jewish feast to the Christian feast, which is one of liberation. The new Pentecost was a step into the spiritual law of liberty or as St. Peter spoke on the first Pentecost of the new covenant: “*You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). It is the Spirit who makes effective the new law and by coming to each one, enables us to profit by and fulfill the acts necessary for salvation (1Cor. 3:16; 6: 9 – 20; Rom. 5:5; 8:26 – 27; 2 Thes. 2: 13 – 26; Rom. 7:6). Thus the feast of the harvest is transformed by the Spirit and made fruitful with the gifts of God through Christ (Rom. 8: 1 – 7).

One of the biblical names for Pentecost is “the festival of first fruits.” A “firstfruit” is the first of a crop to ripen. These were offered to God in thanksgiving for the harvest.

On Pentecost, Christians celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gospels speak often of the coming of the Spirit. John’s gospel tells us that, when Jesus died, “he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” John tells us that the risen Christ breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (This story is the gospel for Pentecost day).

In the Acts of the Apostles we hear today of a great outpouring of the Spirit, who descended in fire and wind on the disciples, just as God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. But that isn’t the only time Luke tells us of the coming of the Spirit. The gospel is filled with stories. Luke tells us that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit. So were Elizabeth and Zechariah, John’s parents. So were Simeon and Anna.

At Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove that descended on Jesus. In Luke’s gospel we hear over and over that Jesus was filled with the power of the Spirit. In the Acts of the Apostles, the descent of the Spirit happens over and over to the disciples. Pentecost is made new again at every baptism, every Eucharist, every time two or more gather in Jesus’ name.