

SESSION 8

PETER AND PENTECOST THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

In the eighth session in our study of St. Peter, Dr. Gray discusses the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in Peter's life starting at Pentecost. When Jesus ascends into heaven, he tells his Apostles that he will send the promise of the Father to them. Peter and the others wait in Jerusalem until the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descends on them. From this point onward we see a marked change in Peter. Speaking in new languages is only one small, albeit attention-grabbing, part of the change. No longer do we see fear or questioning in Peter; instead he leads the Apostles and preaches to the Jews with a remarkable boldness that will characterize the rest of his life and ministry.

At Pentecost Peter offers his testimony, his witness, to teach the crowds about Christ. His words and deeds continue to testify even today to the Lordship of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.



CONNECT

First review the last session with your group. Can you recite the Memory Verse without assistance? Otherwise, look it up (Mark 14:36) and recite it as a group (page 132). Next, bring up any highlight the group may have about the COMMIT reflections.

1. Who inspires you? Briefly share why this person inspires you.

Answers will vary; some possible answers include a spouse, parent, friend, saint, historical figure; their lives might inspire because of their service, their faith, their courage, their intelligence, etc. The boldness of Peter and the Apostles after Pentecost will inspire many to faith in Jesus Christ.

2. Think of a time when someone made a promise to you and kept it. How did you feel when this promise was fulfilled? How did it affect your relationship with the person who fulfilled the promise?

Answers will vary; some possible answers include feeling relieved, happy, surprised, thankful; the relationship may have been strengthened because of increased trust or healing from past disappointments. With the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus sends the promise of the Father.

3. Do you know the date of your baptism? What is something you could do to celebrate its anniversary?

If participants don't know the date of their baptism, encourage them to find out this week. Suggestions for celebrating include: calling your godparents, making a holy hour, going to daily Mass, having a special meal or dessert, etc.



Play the video segment, which will last for approximately 45 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.



DISCUSS

Following are suggested answers to the DISCUSS questions.

1. What reasons does Dr. Gray give for the Apostles being in the Temple, rather than the upper room, when the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost?

Acts 2 says they were together in "one place," but it does not say the upper room. Crowds of pilgrims hear the Apostles speaking in other tongues, which wouldn't make sense if they were in an upstairs room in a private home. 3,000 people are baptized, which would have been hard to imagine in the upper room.

2. In much of his teaching, Peter turns to the psalms of David to give a scriptural understanding of Jesus. On Pentecost, Peter uses Psalms 16 and 132 to testify to Christ's resurrection. If you had to pick one psalm to help someone understand Jesus better, which would you pick? Why?

Answers will vary. Examples: Psalm 1, because it describes the righteous man who loves God's law; Psalm 22, because it talks about suffering and death, but it ends with the Psalmist proclaiming God's deliverance; Psalm 23, because it paints a picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd; etc.

3. In Acts 1:12-26, Peter performs his first official duty as Jesus' prime minister. What is the Old Testament background for the way Peter selects Judas' replacement? What does this tell us about Peter's understanding of the office of Apostle?

The Old Testament background is David's overseeing of the casting of lots to determine priestly and Levitical assignments in the Temple (1 Chronicles 24 and 25); this tells us that Peter understands the office of Apostle to be a priestly office.

4. After Pentecost, Peter speaks and acts with a new boldness, speaking bravely about Christ to the very people he had feared before the Crucifixion. Have you ever felt bold when speaking about your faith? In what ways would you like to be bolder?

Answers will vary by participant.

5. Before he ascends into heaven, Jesus says, "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). What is the promise of the Father (see Luke 11:13)? What does this teach us about how we should pray and how God answers prayer? Luke 11:13 – "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit; God will not withhold his Spirit from anyone who faithfully asks for it. We should strive to pray in accord with God's will for us—he may not answer every prayer for healing or prosperity, but he will always give us his Spirit. Answers may vary by participant on what this teaches each about prayer.



COMMIT

Following are suggested answers to questions in the daily COMMIT reflections.

COMMIT DAY 1 – NOBLE DEEDS OF GREAT MEN

Participants will reflect on how the deeds of the Apostles and holy men and women strengthen our own faith.

Did you have a favorite hero growing up? Who are some of your personal heroes now?

Answers will vary by participant. Heroes may be real or imaginary figures: literary characters, people from the Bible, other historical figures, saints, people still living, family members, etc.

Look up the following passages from the first part of Acts. What deeds or acts of the Apostles are recounted?

Acts 3:1-9 – *healing of a lame man*

Acts 4:5-13 – *preaching with boldness*

Acts 5:12-16 – *signs and wonders, healing of sick and possessed*

Acts 5:17-20, 42 – *arrest and angelic release from prison, preaching regardless of threat of prison*

Acts 8:14-17 – *laying hands on converts, praying for them to receive the Holy Spirit*

Based on these passages, how would you summarize the deeds of Peter and the other Apostles?

The deeds of Peter and others consist of preaching about Jesus (and getting arrested for it), healing the sick, caring for the poor, ordaining men to participate in their ministry, laying their hands on converts so that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit, preaching to the Gentiles, and baptizing converts.

Compare the deeds of Peter to the deeds of Augustus. How is Luke using a familiar literary genre to tell an alternate narrative?

Augustus' deeds are described to show his own greatness—they are a list of impressive accomplishments that are meant to win the loyalty of his subjects. The deeds of the Apostles are focused on Christ, the King of kings, and the building up of Christ's kingdom. This contrast is especially subversive because Caesar was emperor and worshipped as a god, and Luke uses the deeds of the Apostles to show a new and better kingdom, the Kingdom of God, and the mighty deeds that are done in the name of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God.

If the deeds of great men built civilization, what kind of civilization is the Acts of the Apostles concerned with? What can we learn from the deeds recounted?

Luke is using the genre of praxis to show that the Apostles are the true heroes building the most important civilization—the city and Kingdom of God, the Church. The deeds of the Apostles surpass those of Caesar. Augustus performs his deeds from a position of power, while the Apostles perform their deeds from a position of service (and sometimes suffering). From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that true heroes don't always match the world's model, and truly great deeds don't always look successful from the world's point of view. True greatness is concerned first and foremost with the Kingdom of God, no matter what the personal cost.

Look at the following examples from the Old Testament that recount great deeds throughout salvation history. What are some of the deeds remembered?

Wisdom 10:1-21 – *Recounts the events and deeds from Adam through Moses and the Exodus*

Sirach 44:1-49:16 – *Recounts the deeds from Adam through Zerubbabel*

Read Hebrews 11:1-40. What deeds are recounted in this chapter?

Hebrews 11:1-40 – *Recounts deeds from Creation through the prophets, by both men and women*

Do you have a patron saint? If so, what was it about his or her life that inspires you to “run with perseverance the race” that is set before you?

Answers will vary by participant.



COMMIT DAY 2 – THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF APOSTLE

Participants will look at the office of Apostle and its priestly character.

Read 1 Chronicles 23:24-32 and 24:1-19. Lots are cast to determine what kinds of duties? Who has the authority to oversee this process?

1 Chronicles 24:5, 19 – *“They organized them by lot...These had as their appointed duty in their service to come into the house of the LORD according to the procedure established for them by Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.”*

1 Chronicles 24:3 – *“...David organized them according to the appointed duties in their service.”*

Based on the background in 1 Chronicles 23 and 24, why do the Apostles cast lots to select the man who will fill Judas’ vacant office? Why does Peter oversee this process?

The Apostles understand their office as a priestly office, and for that reason they cast lots following in the tradition of how duties were assigned for those serving the house of the Lord. Since Jesus, the new David, has ascended into heaven, Peter, as prime minister and head of the Apostles, oversees this process.

Read the following passages concerning priests in the Old Testament. What priestly duties are described in these passages?

Genesis 14:17-20 – *Melchizedek offers bread and wine, receives Abram’s tithe, and blesses Abram with prayer.*

Leviticus 9:22 – *Aaron blesses the people.*

Exodus 28:29-30 – *Aaron bears the sons of Israel on his breastplate, thus representing the people and interceding for them as he serves God in the holy place.*

Deuteronomy 33:8-10 – *The priestly tribe of Levi is to teach God’s laws and ordinances to the people, as well as make offerings and sacrifices to God.*

1 Samuel 12:18-23 – *Samuel intercedes for the people and instructs them.*

Compare the actions of priests in the Old Testament with the deeds of the Apostles recorded in Acts. What priestly duties are described in these passages?

Acts 2:42-46 – *The Apostles are teaching the people, breaking bread (sacrifice of the Mass), and praying with the community of believers.*

Acts 4:33-35 – *The Apostles accept offerings/tithes from the people.*

Acts 6:1-6 – *The Apostles lay on hands to ordain deacons to serve the Church.*

Acts 8:14-17 – *The Apostles lay on hands, calling down the Holy Spirit.*

What similarities do you see?

Answers will include combinations of the descriptions of the verses listed above.

Read Hebrews 5:5-10. What two roles does Hebrews emphasize regarding Jesus in the following verses?

Hebrews 5:5b, 8 – *Jesus as Son is emphasized.*

Hebrews 5:6, 10 – *Jesus' role as high priest, according to the order of Melchidezek is emphasized.*



COMMIT DAY 3 – GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S

Participants are walked through a Lectio and Meditatio on Acts 2:1-12, and then they answer questions to help them reflect on this passage of Scripture.

Lectio

Reread the passage and list the descriptions relating to the senses. What was seen? Heard? Felt?

The Apostles saw the crowds praying in the Temple, and the priests offering sacrifices. They saw the Spirit resting on each of them like tongues of flame. They heard a sound of a mighty wind, then they heard each other preaching in various languages. The smells of the Temple probably included burnt offerings and incense. They may have felt the Temple shake with the wind of the Spirit. Those who converted felt the waters of baptism.

How are the people “dwelling in Jerusalem” described? From what different parts of the world or countries has the multitude come?

Those dwelling in Jerusalem at the time are described as “devout men from every nation under heaven” and as “the multitude.” These are Jews and converts to Judaism who have come to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. They include “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome.” Thus they have come to Jerusalem from all corners of the known world—from Egypt to the south, from Parthia to the east (modern Iran), from Mesopotamia to the north, and from Cappadocia and Rome to the west.

How is the crowd's reaction described? By what are they surprised?

The crowd's reaction is described as: “bewildered,” “amazed and wondered,” and “amazed and perplexed.” This response is “because each one heard them speaking in his own language” and “in our own tongues.”

Meditatio

The Jewish feast of Pentecost celebrates God's gift of the Law on Mount Sinai. Look at Exodus 19:16-20. How does what's heard and seen at Pentecost recall the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai?

	Giving of Law on Mount Sinai	Giving of the Spirit at Pentecost
What's heard?	Thunder and loud trumpet blast	Sound of a rush of mighty wind
What's seen?	Lightning, smoke, fire	Tongues of fire

While the Old Covenant Law showed God's people what was right and good, it did not give the power to overcome sin and live according to God's law. In Romans 8:1-10, how does Paul describe the power we have in the Spirit? How do you experience the power of the Spirit active in your own life?

Romans 8:2-3 – “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (emphasis added)

Read Genesis 12:3, Joel 2:28, and Isaiah 2:2-3. How is Pentecost the beginning fulfillment of God's promises in these passages?

Genesis 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”

God promised that he would bless all the families of the earth (i.e. all the nations) through Abraham. Jesus is of the line of Abraham; and through his sacrifice for our sins and the gift of baptism and the Spirit, Jesus fulfills this promise.

Joel 2:28 – “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh”

At Pentecost, God does pour out his Spirit beginning with the Jews at Pentecost, and later in Acts extending the gift of his Spirit to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 2:2-3 – “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

At Pentecost, all nations come to the Temple, the house of the Lord, and hear the ways of the Lord proclaimed by the Apostles, and many receive baptism and the Spirit so that they may walk in the paths of the Lord.

The crowd is filled with wonder and amazement at the Apostles' proclamation being made in numerous languages. How does the gift of the Spirit heal the divisions suffered in Genesis 11:1-9?

In Genesis 11:1-9, the peoples are scattered and divided by language, no longer able to speak to or understand one another. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit allows all peoples present to hear the truth of God proclaimed, and through baptism and the gift of the Spirit to be reunited into one family of God.

How does Paul describe our new unity in 1 Corinthians 12:13?

1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

How have you experienced the unity of the Spirit in your relationships with other Catholics/Christians?

Answers will vary by participant. But when we share a belief in God and the teachings of the Church, this provides an immediate foundation for personal and deep friendship.



COMMIT DAY 4 – REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED

Participants will reflect on Peter's instructions to the pilgrims in Jerusalem: "Repent, and be baptized."

Think of a time in your walk with God when you had to ask, "What now?" How did God use that moment to redirect your life?

Answers will vary. It may be an initial moment of conversion, a later turning back to the faith, a change coming after an event that deepened one's faith, etc.

Look up these verses from Jesus and the Apostles' preaching to see the significance of repentance:

Matthew 4:17 – "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Luke 13:3 – "...But unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Acts 17:30 – "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent."

2 Peter 3:9 – "The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Read the following passages. How is the importance of baptism and repentance communicated?

Matthew 28:19 – "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."

Mark 16:15-16 – "...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Luke 24:45-47 – "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'"

John 3:5 – "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'"

1 Peter 3:21 – "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Romans 6:4 – "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

Read the verses below, and then fill in the left figure with the "things of earth" that God's grace is putting to death in you, and fill in the right figure with the "things that are above" that you are putting on in Christ.

Answers will vary by participant. Some examples on the left side include anger, insecurity, being judgmental, pride, harsh words, selfishness, impatience, etc. Some examples on the right side include loving kindness, gentleness, respect, etc.



COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Participants will reflect on Restout's Pentecost painting.

Who is mentioned in Acts 1:12-15?

Acts 1:12-15 – *"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away; and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, **Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.** All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with **the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.** In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (**the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty**)."* (emphasis added)

Who can be identified in the painting?

Mary is seen in a red dress with a blue flowing robe at the picture's center. Immediately next to her appear to be some of "the women" among the group of disciples. Then in various postures appear the Twelve Apostles and a handful of other disciples from "the company of persons" mentioned in Acts 1:12-15.

Looking at Restout's painting, what are the various responses of Mary and the Apostles to what is happening? Mary stands at the center, positioned above the rest of the Apostles and disciples, with an appearance of peaceful calm and awe as she looks upward to heaven. Several disciples follow Mary's lead, looking to the heavens with varying emotions of wonderment, fear, and awe. Several disciples bow their heads in humility and appear in prayer with folded hands. One even appears with his head bowed all the way to the ground, with hands raised to the heavens.

According to Acts 1:12-13, where were the disciples gathered after their return from the Ascension?

Acts 1:12-13 – *"Then they returned to **Jerusalem...** They went up to **the upper room, where they were staying...**"* (emphasis added)

According to Acts 2:1, where were the disciples on the day of Pentecost?

Acts 2:1 – *"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together **in one place.**"* (emphasis added)

According to Acts 2:46, where were the disciples often to be found?

Acts 2:46 – *"And day by day, attending the **temple** together."* (emphasis added)

How does Restout portray the sound from heaven and the way it "filled all the house"?

Restout uses the clouds to indirectly show the mighty wind. The clouds seen in the heavens also are seen entering and filling the room where Mary and the Apostles are located. Additionally, at the center of the heavens is a bright light, whose source is not seen, but which is splitting open the heavens.