

# Connecting with the Sunday Readings

**Pentecost Sunday**

**Gospel Word**

John 20:19-23

While today's Gospel reading is brief, it is packed with meaning. The disciples have locked themselves in a room. They have locked out the world. They feel safe and secure but in a sense, they are captive to their own fear. Through the barricades they have erected, the Risen Christ appears. Despite all that has happened—their abandonment of him during his passion and death, Peter's denial, their doubt and fear, he says "Peace be with you." The Risen Christ offers peace and forgiveness with no finger wagging or request for an explanation. God in Jesus will not be kept out. God through Jesus wants to dwell in our hearts. So, just as God did at the first creation by breathing over the chaos to create the ordered universe, so does Jesus give the disciples the Holy Spirit and the mission of forgiveness and reconciliation. He sends them out into the world to make available to everyone the gift of God's forgiveness.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

## Living the Word

Today we pray: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and renew the face of the Earth. The Holy Spirit dwells in us as an active source of inspiration and empowerment. On this Feast of Pentecost we are reminded that the power of the Holy Spirit is ours to claim. Does this awareness make a difference in our lives?

We have all heard the saying "to err is human but to forgive divine." It is easy to fall back on that saying when someone has hurt us deeply, when we have been betrayed, or when things have been taken from us. Forgiveness, giving it or receiving it, is not the human default attitude or action. It is hard, but today's Gospel reading gives us pause. When you have been abandoned by a family member or friend, is it your normal response to wish them peace and reconciliation? Probably not. It is in those situations where the mettle of our Christianity and call to discipleship is tested. It is in those situations when we can call upon the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit to forgive. We are not alone. We do not act in our own power but we can claim the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

The quote "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained," (John 20:23) is often used as the basis for the Church's power to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Penance through the prayers and actions of the priest. There is another way for individuals to look at it for themselves. To be forgiven is to be freed up. It is to have peace. Think about it from both sides—a time you were forgiven and a time you extended forgiveness to someone. It is a freeing experience. When one is forgiven or when one forgives, one is not bound up any more. Forgiveness sets us free to move on. We are at peace. Perhaps there is someone you can give that gift to today.

### One-line Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, increase in us your gift of courage to be forgiving. Amen.