

# Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost is when we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit found in Acts 2:1-13. The Greek word pentekoste means "fiftieth" and was borrowed from Greek-speaking Jews who used the phrase to refer to the Jewish 'Festival of Weeks'.\* Pentecost therefore, occurs 50 days after Easter Sunday and 10 days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ.

Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church and the start of the Church's mission to the world. According to Acts 2:1-13, Mary and the apostles began to speak in many other languages, enabled by the Holy Spirit. The symbols of Pentecost are wind, fire, the colour red, water and a dove.



\*Leviticus 23:16 instructs people to count seven weeks or "fifty days" from the end of Passover to the beginning of the next holiday in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.



The 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' described in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Galatians 5:22-25 provide us with a model of Christian behaviour that we are encouraged to live in our relationships with everyone. They are: 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.'

## WIND



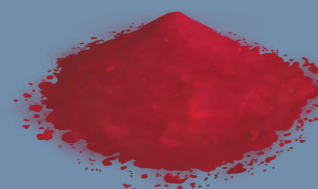
From the noise Mary and the apostles heard as the Spirit descended upon them in Acts 2:2. Wind symbolises God's first breath of love into the creation of the world (Ruach in Hebrew) and this wind strengthens them in their faith and mission (Pneuma in Greek).

## FIRE



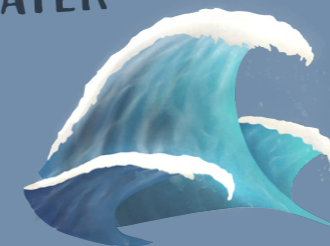
Tongues of fire appeared and rested upon the heads of Mary and the apostles in Acts 2:3. Fire symbolises the Holy Spirit who gave them confidence and courage to go out into the world and share the power of the Good News of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

## RED



The colour used for the liturgical vestments and other visual elements associated with this Feast Day is red. It symbolises the dynamic nature of the Holy Spirit and the love of God that comes from being open to the Spirit's calling in our lives.

## WATER



Symbolises the new life begun at Baptism and which is renewed throughout our lives as we grow in faith. We use water every time we bless ourselves in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) when entering and leaving a church.

## DOVE



The bird symbolises the descent and hovering of the Holy Spirit over Jesus when he was baptised in Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22 and John 1:32. It is the symbol of reconciliation and peace after the Flood when a dove returned to Noah holding an olive leaf in Genesis 8:8-12; and was used as the offering of the poor in worship in Leviticus and in the gospels.