

# **FIFTY DAYS AFTER EASTER A REFLECTION ON PENTECOST**

## **TEACHING NOTES**

This presentation combines learning about the story of Pentecost with a reflection on what Christians mean by the Holy Spirit.

It links to the presentation on Ascension and uses some images from Giotto (14<sup>th</sup> century) as a focus.

Suitable for Key Stage 2 and above.

### **USING THE RESOURCE**

The pictures and headings tell the essence of the story, but you can elaborate on them if you wish. Alternatively, you could reversion the powerpoint so that you only have the pictures showing and revise the text, perhaps using more than one reader or different pictures.

Remember to keep variety in the presentation, reflecting the emotion of the Pentecost scene followed by the meditative atmosphere in the second half. You could use music to help.

### **BACKGROUND**

- Pentecost celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit and is therefore seen as a time of hope and, especially, joy.
- Pentecost should be seen in the context of the whole Easter story, eventually linking to the idea of Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.
- Until about the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, Pentecost was linked to Ascension as one festival – still the best way to understand it.
- Pentecost is celebrated at the same time as the Jewish festival of Shavuot, at the end of Pesach (Passover).
- Pentecost is also known as ‘Whit Sunday’ or ‘Whitsun’. ‘Whit’ means ‘Spirit’. Until recently, Whit Monday was a bank holiday and some churches traditionally held Whit Monday marches.
- The term ‘Pentecostal’ is used today to describe churches which favour spirit-inspired prayer, sometimes including ‘speaking in tongues’.
- Some important Bible readings relate to Pentecost:
  - a. Ezekiel 37:1-4 (The Valley of Dry Bones)
  - b. Psalm 104:24-34 (The Creator Spirit)
  - c. John 14:8-17 (Jesus speaks about the Trinity)  
16:5-15 (Jesus promises to send a ‘Comforter’ to his disciples)  
20:19-23 (Jesus appears to his disciples after the Resurrection)
  - d. Acts 2 (The Story of Pentecost)
  - e. I Corinthians 12:3-13 (The gifts of the spirit).
- In Christian art and literature, the Holy Spirit is often represented both as wind and fire, but also as a dove.

- The liturgical colour for church worship at Pentecost is red, representing the flames.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Giotto pictures in the Ascension and Pentecost presentations are very stylised. That is why they have been chosen – almost like an icon, showing how art of the time told a story through conventional, commonly understood ideas (the tongue of fire literally on the head, the dove radiating power) rather than the more emotional interpretations of e.g. El Greco and others since the 18<sup>th</sup> century or abstract treatments from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. You might find this an interesting idea to explore with the pupils. Look for pictures of Pentecost, e.g. on the internet. What do they show? How do they reflect the age when they were produced? What do the pupils think actually happened at Pentecost? How would they interpret such a scene in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its potential for special effects?
2. Similarly, how do pupils understand the idea of ‘speaking in tongues’? Do they think that the disciples miraculously learnt a new language? Why might they need to ‘speak in tongues’? What might such a phrase mean? What are the different ways in which we understand other people?
3. How would Christians say that the Spirit of God is at work in the world today? How might they answer if someone said that God was not at work in a world filled with difficulty and suffering?

Create a display including some examples of Christian activities / prayer / praise/ work and creativity (art, music, etc).

4. Thinking about the images:

What can the pupils see going on in Giotto’s Pentecost pictures? Who is doing what? How does the artist represent the Holy Spirit?

When the presentation talks about the disciples going out to preach the good news, why do the pupils think the illustration shows a dandelion head?

Wind turbines are used as one illustration of power. These are controversial at the moment (some environmentalists see them as a clean source of renewable energy, others as destroying the landscape). But they provide a useful image here: not only do they make use of the wind’s power, but they also need human intervention to transform that power.

For more on Pentecost, including resources and teaching ideas, visit <http://www.refuel.org.uk/curric/festivals/pentecost/symbols.html>

For more on Christians in action see the ‘Faith Zone’ section on: <http://www.culham.ac.uk/>

For very appropriate song/hymn to accompany this Collective Worship, try: ‘When the Spirit of the Lord is within my heart’

# 50 Days After Easter



FIFTY DAYS AFTER EASTER

Image, Robert Piggott C of E Infant School



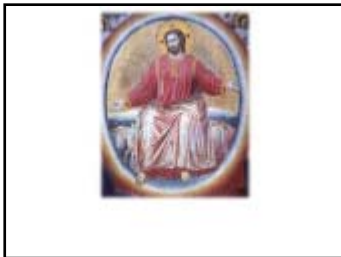
50 days ago... Jesus, who had been crucified, rose from the dead

‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 21. Resurrection’ GIOTTO di Bondone



Ten days ago... Jesus ascended to Heaven

‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 22. Ascension’ Detail, GIOTTO di Bondone



He is now with God the Father, ruling in majesty.

‘Last Judgement’, Detail, GIOTTO di Bondone



But the disciples know something else will happen. They have been told that Jesus will return to them.

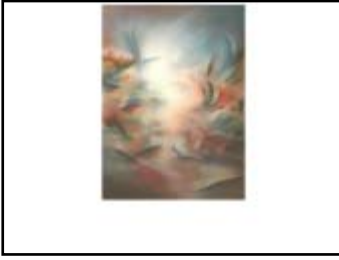
‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 22. Ascension’ Detail, GIOTTO di Bondone



A few days later, during the Jewish festival of Shavuot, the disciples are all together.

‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 23. Pentecost’, GIOTTO di Bondone

# 50 Days After Easter



Suddenly there comes a sound from heaven, like a mighty rushing wind.  
It fills all the house...

‘Whirlwind’, © Sophie Hacker.



Tongues of fire come down on the disciples...

‘Wellspring’, © Sophie Hacker.



And they are all filled with the Holy Spirit and  
begin to speak with other tongues. Everyone can understand them.

‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 23. Pentecost’ Detail, GIOTTO di Bondone



What Jesus had promised is coming true. His spirit, his power, is here.

‘Scenes from the Life of Christ: 23. Pentecost’ Detail, GIOTTO di Bondone



The disciples are overjoyed and go into the world to preach the good  
news. Jesus’ work will continue in a new way.

Image © 2004 Nick Kurzenko. Source: <http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/photos/>



Today, Christians believe that Jesus is with them and that the Holy Spirit  
can work through them. But how can they know?

Images, The Faithzone: <http://www.thefaithzone.org.uk/>

# 50 Days After Easter



We cannot see the wind, but we know it is there in all its different forms...

Images, see below



Great, frightening power

Photo, NASA. <http://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/sseop/>



Mighty strength to help us...

Photo, REEP, <http://www.reep.org/>



... and support us

Photo, © Lazenby Education.



Gentle breezes to cool us

Photo, REEP, [http://www.reep.org](http://www.reep.org/)



Sweet smells to delight us

Photo, © Lazenby Education.

# 50 Days After Easter



At Pentecost, Christians think about the Holy Spirit – invisible as the wind but just as powerful.

Photo, © Lazenby Education.



Through the Spirit, Jesus and God the Father are here for ever.

Image, Robert Piggott C of E Infant School



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<http://www.culham.info>

Giotto images source: <http://gallery.euroweb.hu/>