

## Notes for Next Sunday

Pentecost Sunday

### The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ezekiel 37:1-14). After Ezekiel deflated the pride and self-conceit of his hearers (ch 36), he had to overcome their reluctance to accept the Gospel of restoration. Because the heart of the exiles was “deceitful . . . and desperately sick” (Jer 17:9), they did not greet the glorious promise of redemption with jubilation but with the doleful lament of despair: “Our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off” (Ezk 37:11). However, the Good Shepherd does not hesitate to seek out also the sheep that have strayed into the desolate country of sullen doubt and bleak hopelessness. He granted Ezekiel a vision that was to convince his hearers that their despair grew out of their refusal to believe in a Creator who “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rm 4:17; cf Dt 32:39; Ps 33:9).

Epistle (Acts 2:1-21). The first thirteen verses deal with the Spirit coming down on the apostles and other disciples who had been staying in one place waiting as they had been told to do by Jesus. It was the day of Pentecost and was the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week. Wind and fire were a part of the physical indication of the Spirit's presence. The amazing result was that people who had come from many regions of the then known world to celebrate could now hear the message of salvation in their own language. Of course there always seem to be detractors and that was so here when some suggested the disciples were drunk. In verses 14-21 Peter debunks the drunkenness accusation by pointing out that it was only 9:00 A.M. (On a festival day such as Pentecost, the Jew would not break his fast until at least 10:00 A.M.). He then goes on quoting how all this had been prophesied by the Prophet Joel.

Gospel (John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15). Christ comforts the disciples by promising to send them the Helper (the Holy Spirit), who will guide them into a deeper understanding of Christ's Word. Mistakenly, we sometimes think that Jesus' physical absence places us at a disadvantage. In fact, Jesus is present with us through the witness of the Spirit, who works among us through God's Word and Sacraments.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

#### OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 37:1-14

**The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “O Sovereign LORD, you alone know.” <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath<sup>a</sup> enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’” <sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. <sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup>I will put my Spirit**

**in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.”**

*37:2 led me back and forth.* God causes Ezekiel to go around and around or back and forth among the bones in order to see that they all were “very dry” – without the least hint or hope of life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*37:3 son of man* This title is 93 times in Ezekiel and always refers to Ezekiel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*37:3 can these bones live.* The Lord asks a rhetorical question: “Can these bones live?” The obvious answer is no. Yet Ezekiel expresses faith in the omnipotence of God by answering that only God knows the answer. Perhaps he hoped against all hope that God would somehow bring to life those who were so utterly dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

*37:3 you alone know.* Only the God who made man from the dust of the earth could make something living out of that valley full of bones which represented the whole community of exiles. (PBC)

*37:4-6.* Through His Word, God promises miraculous change, despite the description in v 2. The bones, arranged according to their former function and position, are covered with sinews and flesh. (TLSB)

*37:8 but there was no breath.* This visionary re-creation of God’s people recalls the two-step creation of man in Ge 2:7, where man was first formed from the dust and then received the breath of life. (CSB)

*37:10 breath came into them.* Humanly speaking, Israel’s hopes for survival appeared dead and buried in the exile. Prospects of national revival were as unlikely as expecting a vast array of skeletons, dried and dismembered, to come to life again. Yet at God’s command, spoken by His prophet, death must surrender its victims. (TLSB)

*37:13 know that I am the Lord.* The recognition formula, “then you will know that I am Yahweh” (repeated for emphasis in the next verse), shows that “as ever in the book of Ezekiel, salvation is to be a means to a divine end. The redeeming act of God would bring with it the revelation of his true self.” (CC)

#### EPISTLE – Acts 2:1-21

**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.<sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.<sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.<sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.<sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.<sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?<sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?<sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome<sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”<sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”<sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.<sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!<sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:<sup>17</sup>” “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons**

and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

2:2 *violent wind*. Breath or wind is a symbol of the Spirit of God. (CSB)

2:3 *fire*. A symbol of the divine presence, it was also associated with judgment. (CSB)

2:4 *in other tongues*. Miraculous ability to communicate in foreign languages the speakers had never learned. (TLSB)

2:5 *God-fearing Jews*. Jews dispersed throughout the world who piously observed the Law, now in Jerusalem to observe the required feasts. (TLSB)

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. <sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>” “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

2:17–18 *all people ... sons ... daughters ... young men ... old men ... men ... women*. The Spirit is bestowed on all, irrespective of sex, age and rank. (CSB)

2:20 *day of the Lord*. When Christ returns in glory. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

<sup>26</sup> “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> “Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ <sup>6</sup> Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. <sup>7</sup> But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt<sup>a</sup> in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. <sup>12</sup> “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup> He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. <sup>16</sup> “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

*15:26 Counselor.* "Counselor" can be translated "Comforter," "Advocate," "The one who comfortingly stands beside us at all thing, giving us all that we need. (Buls)

*15:26 goes out from the Father.* This is to show that the Spirit like Jesus does not just act on his own but is a part of an eternal plan. Jesus is trying to give them some insight about the interior life of God for their comfort.

*16:5 none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'* Thomas had asked such a question earlier (14:5). More recently, the disciples had been too preoccupied with their own loss to ask more perceptive questions about His impending departure. (TLSB)

*16:7 I tell you the truth.* Jesus is working hard at explaining what will shortly happen in such a way that they not only understand it but are also confident about the future. One of the problems he encounters is that they are only focused in on themselves and much of what he is telling them is going right over their heads. Besides the clear and frequent explanation he now assures them that what he is telling them is the truth and they can depend on it. (Buls)

*16:8 he will convict the world.* This implies the refutation of error, the discovery of wrong-doing, the bringing it home to the person convinced, and thus convicted; making such a one see that he is open condemnation of conscience or of men, or of the Law of God. This conviction may in some cases lead to conviction and deliverance, but is distinct from it, and sometimes also may issue after such a manifestation in hardness and impenitence. (PC)

*16:10 in regard to righteousness.* The righteousness brought about by Christ's sacrificial death. No one but the Holy Spirit can reveal to a person that a righteous status before God does not depend on good works but on Christ's death on the cross. (CSB)

*16:12 more than you can now bear.* This may mean "more than you can understand now," or "more than you can perform without the Spirit's help" (to live out Christ's teaching requires the enabling presence of the Spirit). (CSB)