

Lectionary Texts for May 19, 2024 • *Day of Pentecost* - Year B

Acts 2:1-21 or Ezekiel 37:1-14 • Psalm 104:24-34, 35b • Romans 8:22-27 or Acts 2:1-21 •

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15



Acts 2:1-21

The Descent of the Holy Ghost, 1546, by Titian (Tiziano Vecelli), Italian, c. 1488-1576

Oil on canvas, 18'8" x 8'6"

Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute, Venice, Italy

Continued

In the summer of 1630, an unusually devastating outbreak of the plague occurred in Venice, and by 1631 nearly a third of the population had died from it. Afterwards, the Venetian Senate decreed that a new church would be built, dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Eleven submissions to the competition for the design were submitted, and 26-year-old Baldassare Longhena was chosen. Rather than the more common linear plan, he created an octagonal structure with two domes and two bell-towers. Located at the highly visible east entrance of the Grand Canal, the Santa Maria della Salute (Saint Mary of Health) was constructed on a platform of 1,000,000 wooden piles. (The pictures on page 6 show the outside of the church at the entrance to the Grand Canal and this painting as situated within the church.)

The third altar to the left of the main entrance contains this work by Titian. Considered the most important member of the 16th century Venetian school, Titian also is the most represented artist in this church, with other paintings as well as ceiling paintings. One of the most versatile of Italian painters, he was adept at portraits and landscapes as well as mythological and religious subjects. His application and use of color exerted a profound influence on painters of the late Italian Renaissance as well as future Western artists.

Here we see his understanding of the event of Pentecost. Flaming tongues of fire are above the heads of attendees. Represented by the dove, the Holy Spirit shines rays of light, with the brightest focused on Mary. Peter, in a red cloak just to the right of Mary, is staring at her face. With the exceptions of Peter and the man behind Mary's left shoulder, both of whom seem to be observing her reaction, all seem to be reacting in various ways of astonishment, some with fright, some with praise, some with prayer. (See lightened close-up on page 6 to better see both the flaming tongues and the reactions.)

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan
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Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and

wresidents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

or

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?”

I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works —

who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.

Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

For in hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope.

For who hopes for what is seen?

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

or

Acts 2:1-21 (See pages 2 and 3.)

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."



Top: Santa Maria della Salute (Saint Mary of Health) sited at the entrance of Venice's Grand Canal. **Left:** *The Descent of the Holy Ghost* in its surroundings within the church. **Below:** Lightened close-up of *The Descent of the Holy Ghost* to better see the flaming tongues of fire and the men observing Mary.

