

Worship on the Web



Season of Pentecost

Pentecost is the festival when Christians celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is celebrated on the Sunday 50 days after Easter. Pentecost is also known as *Whitsun*.

The meaning of Pentecost

In the Acts of the Apostles, the book of the Bible which tells us what happened to Jesus' disciples after he ascended up to heaven, the story goes that they were celebrating the Jewish harvest festival of Shavuot or Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on them.

When the Spirit came, the account says, there was a sound of rushing wind, and tongues of fire appeared. The apostles (the name the disciples of Jesus came to be known by) then found themselves speaking in foreign languages. People assumed they were drunk, but Simon Peter addressed the crowd saying they were full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 1 to 2:21).

Christians celebrate Pentecost with a colourful church service. In vestments and hangings, red is an important colour, symbolic of the flames in which the Holy Spirit came to earth.

Other symbols associated with the Holy Spirit may also be used, for example, the representation of a white dove (John 1:32).



The origins of Pentecost

Pentecost is a Greek word meaning 50 and refers to the 50th day after Passover or Pasch. As the Jewish Passover festival had taken on new meaning for the Christian church as Easter it was a natural progression to include Pentecost to commemorate the event that took place at that time.