

Pentecost Sunday

Introit: Spiritus Domini .

The feast of Pentecost celebrates, as we know, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles under the form of tongues of fire, fifty days after Easter, and after a retreat of ten days in the Cenacle under the guidance of the Virgin Mary, making them witnesses of the resurrection of Christ and of the salvation brought to all men to the ends of the earth.

The chants of the Proper of the Mass admirably express this invasion of the world by the Holy Spirit.

The text of the Introit is taken from the Old Testament, and more precisely from the book of the Wisdom of which this is one of the first verses.

Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum, et hoc quod continent omnia scientiam habet vocis.

The Spirit of the Lord fills the universe, and he, who holds all things together, has the knowledge of every word.

Note that the *hoc* pronoun refers to *Spiritus*, which is masculine, but the neutral of the Greek *Pneuma* was kept. In the Old Testament the Spirit of the Lord did not designate a distinct person, since the revelation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity had not yet been received; *Spiritus* is the creative breath, it is a way of designating God who is pure spirit, who is present everywhere, makes everything exist in perfect cohesion. He knows everything, he sees everything, he hears even our every word. In the liturgy of Pentecost this text applies to the Holy Spirit, third person of the Holy Trinity, who invades all hearts on this day, ensuring the unity of spirits in the diversity of languages. The melody expresses wonderfully this impetuous breath of the Spirit rising like a violent wind, Scripture tells us. It starts mysteriously from the low, then gradually rises in an immense crescendo to the high extreme, and returns a second time before slowly calming down on the last three Alleluias. This Introit is accompanied by the first verse of Psalm 67, a triumphal acclamation of which we had already found extracts in the Mass of the Ascension, at the second Alleluia and at Communion, and of which we will find a passage in today's Offertory.

Exsurgat Deus, et dissipentur inimici ejus: et fugiant qui oderunt cum a facie ejus.

God arises and his enemies are scattered, and those who breathe him flee before his face,

Alleluia: Emitte Spiritum

For the last time of the year, since this Sunday of Pentecost is the last of the Easter season, there is no Gradual but two Alleluias, and as the previous Sundays these two Alleluias are quite different, the second being much longer. The first uses exactly the same melody as the first Alleluia of the Feast of the Ascension, a typical melody that recurs quite often during the year. The text of the verse is taken from Psalm 103, a great hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the wonders of creation.

Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terræ.

Send your Spirit and they will be created, and you will renew the face of the earth.

"They" are all living beings, but in the psalm the verb is indicative, it is an affirmation. After telling the Lord "you take your breath out, and all fall into nothingness," the psalmist adds, "You send your breath, and they are created again." The liturgy of Pentecost, by putting the word in the imperative, makes this verse a prayer, and the breath that is begged to God to send is the Holy Spirit, it is he who will make everything new. The rather soft and calm melody is well suited to a supplicating prayer.

Alleluia: Veni Sancte Spiritus

The second Alleluia on Pentecost Sunday is markedly different from the first. Here we have neither typical melody nor scriptural text, it is an original composition. It is attributed to the king of France Robert the Pious, son of Hugh Capet, who lived at the beginning of the eleventh century. This is not surprising: the king of France at that time was a liturgical personage, he was the "bishop from outside". The coronation was considered a sacrament, and when the king had received, as was the case of Robert the Pious, a careful education in a monastery, he gladly fulfilled the function of cantor. The text of this Alleluia has become very famous. This is the typical prayer to the Holy Spirit that is often recited to invoke at the beginning of an important meeting.

Veni Sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium; et tui amoris in eis ignem accende.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.

The highly developed melody is really expressive and pleading. This Alleluia is sung on your knees.

Sequence: Veni Sancte Spiritus

The verse of the second alleluia of the Mass on Pentecost Sunday is immediately followed by a Sequence, which develops the same literary and musical themes as the Alleluia, but which was composed later. Indeed it is generally attributed to Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, who lived in the early thirteenth century. It consists of ten stanzas, whose melodies are repeated two by two, and each of which is composed of three small seven-foot verses. The text is very poetic and the melody, quite lyrical and inspired by that of the Alleluia, highlights it perfectly.

Veni Sancte Spiritus, Et emitte cœlitus lucis tuæ radium. Veni pater pauperum, Veni dator munerum, Veni lumen cordium.

Come Holy Spirit, send from heaven A ray of your light, come Father of the poor, come dispensing Donations, come light of the courses.
Consolator optime, Dulcis hospes animæ, Dulce refrigerium. In labore requies, In æstu temperies, In fletu solatium.
Very good comforter, gentle guest of the soul, sweet refreshment, rest in toil, moderation in heat, consolation in tears.

O lux beatissima, Reple cordis intima tuorum fidelium. Sine tuo numine, Nihil est in homine, Nihil est innoxium.

O blessed light, fill to the bottom the courts of your faithful; Without your help there is nothing in man, nothing that is without defects.

Lava quod est sordidum, Riga quod est aridum, Sana quod est saucium. Flecte quod est rigidum, Fove quod est frigidum, Rege quod est devium.

Wash what is soiled, water what is dry, heal what is wounded, loosen what is stiff, warm what is cold, straighten what is twisted.

Da tuis fidelibus, In te confidentibus, Sacrum septenarium. Da virtutis meritum, Da salutis exitum, Da perenne gaudium.

Give your faithful who trust you your seven sacred gifts. Give them the reward of their virtues, final salvation, and eternal joy.

Offertory: Confirma hoc

The text of the Pentecost Sunday Offertory is taken from Psalm 67, the first verse of which we found in the Introit, and which already appeared twice in the Mass of the Ascension. It is a triumphant song of thanksgiving for the victories granted by the Lord to his people, including the conquest of the promised land from Sinai to Jerusalem. We are here towards the end of the psalm, when the people arrived on the holy mountain, ask the Lord to confirm the wonders he has wrought in establishing his reign over all nations.

Confirma hoc, Deus, quod operatus es in nobis: a templo tuo quod est in Jerusalem tibi offerent reges munera.

Confirm, O God, what you have accomplished in us. In your temple, which is in Jerusalem, the kings will give you gifts.

These kings who offer gifts are obviously reminiscent of the Epiphany; This is not accidental. Between Christmas and Epiphany there is the same relationship as between Easter and Pentecost, between the mystery that is accomplished in secret and its manifestation to all peoples. The mystery of the Redemption that was accomplished at Easter is today manifested by the Apostles, to whom the descent of the Holy Spirit gave the light to finally understand what had happened and the strength to proclaim it. In each of us this mystery has been fulfilled by the grace of Baptism, and it is the sacrament of confirmation that completes it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, making us apostles and witnesses. There is thus a connection between this word of "confirmation" and the first word of the offertory *Confirma*. The melody calmly meditates on the richness of this text in this contemplative style which is most often that of the Offertories. It is very similar in particular to that of the Offertory of the Christmas Midnight Mass.

Communion: Factus est repente

The text of the Pentecost Sunday Communion is taken from the account of the Acts of the Apostles.

Factus est repente de cœlo sonus advenientis spiritus vehementis, ubi erant sedentes, et repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto, loquentes magnalia Dei.

Suddenly a sound came from heaven like that of a strong wind, invading the place where they were sitting, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit, narrating the wonders accomplished by God.

This text speaks for itself. The very eventful melody perfectly follows the different inflections. The great intervals of the beginning evoke the impetuous arrival of the wind; an enthusiastic crescendo rises at the beginning of the second sentence, and then the melody spreads complacently to announce the wonders of God.