

## **Acts 2:1-21<sup>ii</sup>**

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 residents 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.'

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**<sup>ii</sup> About the First (or Second) Reading: Acts 2:1-21**

Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, celebrated 50 days after Passover. At this feast, the first fruits of the wheat harvest were presented and the covenant with God was remembered and renewed. Luke describes the promised outpouring of the Spirit and the beginning of the Church's mission during this feast.

Like the gospel writer John, Luke understands the gift of the Spirit as a reversal of this world's confusion and social breakdown brought about at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) and the fulfillment of the promise of a new community with a new form of covenant (Jeremiah 31:33). The law, personified, will be possessed by all and will dwell in the heart of each individual.

The empowerment brought by the Spirit is not babbling but proclamation. Those who heard it, whether they were residents of Jerusalem or pilgrims in town for the feast, were astounded by the variety of languages in which "God's deeds of power" (v. 11) were communicated. The diversity of their geographical origins represents the spread of the gospel to all the nations of the world.