

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

PENTECOST SUNDAY, YEAR C

Psalm 103 (104)

This week we read a few verses from a long psalm of praise to God the Creator. It is often called 'the pearl of the Psalter' and is written in a hymn-like style.

Scholars have often noted parallels between this psalm and an Egyptian 'Hymn to the Sun' (or 'Hymn to Creation') by Pharaoh Akhenaton (1352–1336 BC). However, the understanding of creation shown throughout the whole psalm, and the references to God's spirit-giving life, are clearly those found in the book of Genesis (1–2). In today's short extract, the line '*The earth is full of your riches*' summarises the theme of the rest of the psalm.

The reference to the spirit (breath) of God makes it the psalm of choice for Christians for Pentecost Sunday, although the notion of God's spirit here is very different from the Pentecostal Holy Spirit.

However, it stresses that all of God's creation is dependent on God's presence and breath: '*You take back your spirit, they die; ... You send forth your spirit, they are created.*'

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew text for this verse is in the imperfect tense, used when an action, having taken place in the past, is still continuing to the present day.

God's creation is not complete; it is still unfolding and we are called to participate in God's ongoing creative activity. This psalm is a good reminder of our duty to look after, protect and sustain God's creation.



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Gospel John 14: 15–16, 23–26

Today's reading, with the exception of a few verses at the beginning and end of this passage, is the same as the Gospel text for the Sixth Sunday of Easter in Year C. More background notes on this text can be found in the Prego Plus for that week.

On the Feast of Pentecost we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of God's Church.

Pentecost was originally a Jewish agricultural feast celebrated fifty days after Passover (the word Pentecost means 'fiftieth' in Greek). On this day Jewish people recalled the giving of the Law by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. (Exodus 20)

Christians celebrate Pentecost, remembering God's gift of his Holy Spirit to the disciples, marking the beginning of His Church; a Spirit which continues to empower people to carry on Jesus's ministry throughout the world today.

The author of the Acts of the Apostles is the only writer to describe the events of Pentecost (Acts 2). He speaks of the symbols associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit:

The sound of a mighty wind

In the Old Testament the Spirit is referred to as the breath of God, as in this week's psalm.

The tongues of fire

A reminder of a Jewish tradition that states that when God spoke on Mount Sinai, his word divided into seventy tongues (believed to be the number of nations in the world at that time).

When the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in the form of tongues of fire, they were able to speak in many different languages.

