



*Pentecost, by Martin Erspamer, OSB (2013).*

Martin Erspamer is a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey in southern Indiana, USA, and a well-known liturgical artist and liturgical consultant. Martin works in a wide range of media, including pottery, stained glass, and wood, and is internationally known for his illustration of sacred themes.

This piece was commissioned by Liturgical Press for its version of *The Roman Missal, Third Edition*. Few publishers in English-speaking countries commissioned original artwork for the RM.

*Easter greetings to all members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on this Pentecost Sunday, the 50<sup>th</sup> day of Easter,*

1. **LITURGY BRISBANE**, from our own archdiocese, provides the Sunday Readings for home reflection. Click on the link below for today's texts.

We all know the drill: the first document contains the Sunday readings with associated commentaries and prayers. It is suggested that families gather to read the Scriptures aloud together:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/sunday-readings-at-home.html/>

The second resource is designed for families with young children. An extract from the Sunday gospel is provided, along with several reflection questions, a family activity and a worksheet for children:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/family-prayer-week-by-week.html/>



2. **REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.** We again share several reflections on the Sunday scriptures our church chooses for Pentecost Sunday.

We are able to hear the Word being reflected upon from female and male faith perspectives . . .

a. Today's Sunday preaching is offered by C. Vanessa White who is a vibrant member of the CTU family and Associate Professor of Spirituality and Ministry. Vanessa is also the Director of the Certificates in Pastoral Studies and Black Theology and Ministry at Catholic Theological Union. The link offers a video of the reflection, the text and some background of the preacher:

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/05312020>



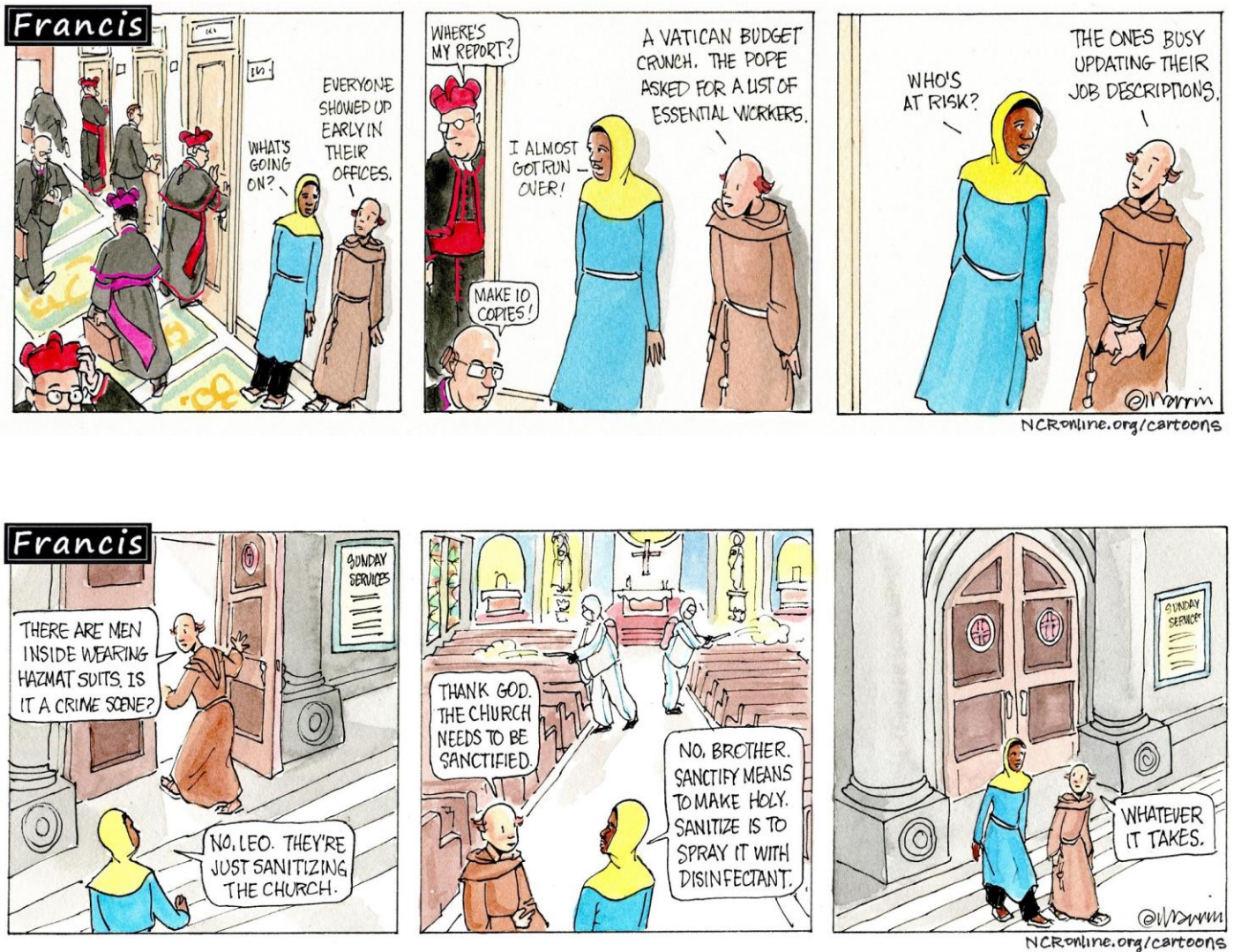
b. Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother of the Australian province who ministers in Rome, offers us this reflection. It is entitled: *Let Pentecost become for us a daily experience*:

<https://www.catholicreligious.org.au/gospel-reflections/2020/5/29/d5irwh8fkr012insw8mlm6ugx19vqg>





### 3. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



28<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020

4. We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Bill Castley, Paul White, Thyrleene Devin, Bridget Muller, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Jonathon Hancock, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Nicole Wimmer, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, Trish Merlehan, Kath Pascoe, Suzy Collyer, Pat Shannon, Lyn Elson, and Paul Maschio.

*Don't ever feel discouraged, For Jesus is your friend;  
And if you lack for knowledge He'll never refuse to lend.*

AFRICAN-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL

5. This month of May is the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si* – Pope Francis' letter to all people of good-will concerning human care for creation *for the common good*. It was ground-breaking and remains so. For five Sundays starting last Sunday, we are promoting the anniversary of *Laudato Si*. You might like to view Francis' invitation to this week. It is on the website of the Office for Social Justice from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference:

<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/event/laudato-si-week/>

Bishop Vincent Long from the Church of Parramatta suggests it isn't business as usual:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LLWjANWHzc>





## THE INVISIBILITY OF WOMEN IN OUR DEPICTION OF PENTECOST

### *Recovering the "hidden history" the Church has forgotten*

Can you imagine someone running a quiz in a religion class and asking, "When was home lockdown mentioned in the bible?"

The likely prize-winner might be the one who fired back, "But 'lockdown' was only invented a couple months ago!"

"But there actually is an equivalent in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke the Evangelist tells us that on Ascension Day Jesus "ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4).

Luke then tells us that the whole group "returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem ... [and] ... when they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying ... [and] ... all these

were constantly devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:12-4).

That sounds very much like a "lockdown". They were all staying in one room and praying!

But how do *you* imagine the scene? And who do *you* imagine was in the group?

### *Great shared images*

Running in the back of our minds as we pray, preach and think are the great images that

we share. They are so common in fact that for most of us, most of the time, they are invisible.

Yet these great images are potent because they can both open up a world for us or they can lock us into narrow ways.

Imagination is the great liberator (therefore dictators dislike the free-spirit of artists). But it can also be a jailer (and hence

tyrants want an official art to spread their message).

We Christians have many common images: for example, the crib and the crucifix. And thanks to Luke's great word picture in Acts 1-2, we also have the image of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

As we prepare to celebrate this feast this Sunday (31<sup>st</sup> May), rather than reflect on what it might "mean" or some abstract bit of theology, let's just consider how we imagine it.

When we hear the word Pentecost what picture do we have in our minds?

So, stop reading now, and just let the image come into your mind. Note all the bits of the picture, and perhaps you might sketch it on the back of an envelope or list what you see in your memory.

I suspect that the image looks something like this: there is a room with lots of people. Mary,

probably in blue, is in the middle, surrounded by the apostles (usually with a certain symmetry: six on one side and six on the other). And over each of their heads a tongue of fire coming down from a dove further up in the picture.

I remember seeing this in a big coloured picture on a school corridor when I was five years old, then later on in a picture in a catechism book. And I saw it most recently in a magnificent stained glass window.

Can *you* think of anything or anyone else?

### *Invisible women*

Now imagine another scene: there are the twelve, Mary, some other men and some more women – and this larger group all have tongues, as of fire, resting on them. This image appears strange, indeed just plain "wrong".

But think on for a moment: the details of who was in the room is based on the description of the group that returned from the Mount of Olives to stay in the Upper Room as given in Acts 1:12-5.

Now we know that while there they held an election to bring that core group – The Twelve – back up to strength after Judas Iscariot's departure. So the extra men could be Matthias and Joseph Barsabbas.

But what if we imagine that there are other women besides Mary? Do you think they should be included? And, if so, should they be shown with tongues of fire?

Clearly, the answer to these questions in most imaginations is a firm "no"; these figures should not intrude on the scene.

The women simply were not there: in the millions of depictions of Pentecost they do not appear. In these images we just have "the apostles", upon whom the Church is founded, and Mary, who is its model. There are no more and no less.

Our images in mosaic and oil, on walls and canvas, by great artists decorating church walls with frescos and by children doing likewise with crayons and paper all affirm a single image: only one woman should be seen in the image of the Spirit empowering the Church at Pentecost.

All images to the contrary are just more of the "soppy" inclusiveness of liberals who want to placate feminists (at least that was one priest's answer when I posed the question at an in-service day on preaching recently)!

### *The festival of Shavuot*

*Sed contra*: the "facts" behind the image are slightly more awkward than the way we commonly imagine it!

The first generations of the followers of Jesus continued to celebrate a festival they were long familiar with as Jews. It was called Pentecost in Greek and Shavuot in Hebrew.

Jews will celebrate that feast again this year between Thursday and Saturday (28-30 May).

We see this continuity in the case of Paul who writes to the Corinthians:

*Perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me.*

(1 Cor 16:6-9)

Asking what this "meant" to these early Christians is to imagine that they had our post-Enlightenment attitude to religion where "meaning" is the most important category.

The simple reality was that they continued to live within a year structured as it had always been with feasts and fasts except where they had deliberately changed from the practice of other Jews: the move from the Sabbath to the first day of week (i.e. Sunday) being the most obvious.

This persistence of the festival of Pentecost, with its fixed link of fifty days from the time of Passover, meant that it could easily be linked within the preaching to the story of the Christ-event.

### *Luke's view of history*

This is exactly what we find happening around the beginning of the second century within Luke's preaching. Within his wide-angle presentation of the gospel – beginning with the birth of Jesus at the end of the period of Israel's preparation and ending with the gospel reaching the ends of the earth –



Pentecost is a great turning point within Luke's view of history.

Up to that day, the followers of Jesus are in the presence of the Christ as learners – literally "disciples". But once the Spirit comes upon them they become "witnesses" and are empowered to preach the Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, and the whole earth.

This view of history, this special moment of being empowered by the Spirit after the Christ has left the earth, is found only within Luke's preaching. And Luke links this new time in history to an established festival – the Day of Pentecost.

Luke was, in effect, taking a fixed moment in his audience's year and using it to hang a particular way of understanding the relation of the Church to the Anointed of the Father who invests them with the Spirit.

The classic image is that of Acts 2:1-4:

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Everyone who was there received the Spirit, for over each of them was a tongue of fire, and they all began to speak in tongues. That much seems clear within Luke's great dramatic image.

The question is: who are "they" who were "all together"?

### *The women were there*

The answer to this has already been given by Luke earlier in Acts (1:12-14):

*Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away; and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

So the Spirit came down upon three different groups of people gathered in the Upper Room.

First, there is that unique group called the Twelve, though now minus Judas. There are several lists of the Twelve (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-9; Lk 6:14-6; Acts 1:13) and each one contains discrepancies.

It seems that by the time the gospels were composed, memory of the list had become frayed at the edges. Indeed, the 'Twelve' had become the prototypical disciples and apostles. We see this in Mt 10:1-2 and Luke 6:13 where the evangelists transform the Twelve into a group with two names "the twelve disciples" and "the twelve apostles".

However, Luke wants to make it clear that by the Day of Pentecost this group was back at full strength. Acts (1:23-26)

recounts that while they were in the upper room waiting in prayer for the Spirit, they elected and enrolled Matthias.

So much for the first group – who appear in every image of Pentecost – of twelve named men.

Second, we have a group of women – very rare in our traditional images – but we are not told how many and have only one name: 'Mary, the mother of Jesus.

'The plural "women" suggests a group of more than a couple. But how many were there? Three, four, a dozen? We do not know.

Counting and listing indicate importance, and women were not that important in the Greek-speaking world of two millennia ago. But in our popular iconography they have fallen even further to the point of invisibility in our common memory.

Third, we have another well-defined group from the time of Jesus: his brothers. This group was already disappearing from view by the time that Luke wrote. He only ever mentions them as a group (Lk 8:18-21) without ever naming them (unlike Mk 6:3 and Mt 13:55 – although the memory was already slipping for one name has changed).

But Luke would have imagined a group of four men. This group would be progressively written out of the script in the decades following Luke and we see this happening in the text we now call the *Protevangelium of James*, which was written in the mid-second century.

This group of four males was, not surprisingly, never included within the iconography of the Pentecost event.

### *Putting women back into the scene*

Today when the recovery of "the hidden history" of women is a major part of historical studies and women's studies, it is significant that Christian iconography has forgotten – virtually completely – the presence of women in the representation of Luke's coming of the Spirit.

Within theology, history – the systematic study of the past – performs many key tasks. It recovers forgotten parts of our memory that allow us to present the Tradition in a fuller way. And, it often reminds us that apparently "traditional" ways of presenting the Christian message may have suffered distortion.

The invisibility of the women within our Pentecost icon is a case in point. It was the whole Church that was empowered by the Spirit in Luke's visual theology. We, by contrast, have limited it to the specialist group of the Twelve and that unique Christian, Mary.

Perhaps it is time to recover a hidden history in our icons of Pentecost. It must have all three groups – so at least a group of twenty – made up of both women and men with "a tongue of fire" over each head.

Perhaps you will recall how women have become invisible at Pentecost when you next look at a representation of Luke's image. The fact that our traditional images do not include women may explain other aspects of the place of women in our Church life and theology.

So, we have a new question: where else are women still invisible in our ecclesial memory?



Thomas O'Loughlin is a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and professor of historical theology at the University of Nottingham (UK). His latest book is *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking Up Pope Francis's Call to Theologians* (Liturgical Press, 2019).

7. A reminder that **THE CATHOLIC LEADER** digital edition is currently delivered free to your inbox every Thursday morning. Sign up here <https://bit.ly/2ShdcSZ> A free subscription is available while Masses are suspended across the Archdiocese of Brisbane due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The editor and his team hopes this offer gives us all a sense of connection, inspiration and renewal in the faith, at a time when living the faith has changed.

8. The **PARISH GIVING APP** is now working. I trialled it myself, it works, and some folk have given via this app. Be sure to choose BOONAH PARISH! <https://parishgiving.brisbanecatholic.org.au/slides/> All gifts are gratefully received and thanks to those who dropped in their planned giving envelopes this week.

9. Homelessness is a real-life tragedy in a community. The Auckland City Mission in New Zealand will soon celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding.

A new song, *Find your way back home*, has been written by Neil Finn who was previously with Split Enz and Crowded House. Finn is currently a member of Fleetwood Mac – yes . . . Fleetwood Mac!

Neil Finn wrote it to help raise funds for a new building called *Homeground* that will continue to serve the work of the mission. *Homeground* is part of the mission's plan to eliminate homelessness in Auckland. He invited Stevie Nicks onto the recording and Christine McVie onto the construction of the song – these are the women of Fleetwood Mac.

Finn was inspired to write this song after meeting a childhood friend at a homeless shelter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfgfxFbqfcg&feature=youtu.be>

10. The ordained priests who serve the South Country Deanery met last week. It was a good gathering as we hadn't seen one another for two months. So it was a good catch up! We shared what has been happening in the communities we serve and the initiatives we have each undertaken. We continued to seek further clarification of what the government requires of each parish *if the doors are open*. Let us be clear that *public gatherings for eucharist* remain suspended in our Church. The government and church requirements are onerous and involve the submission of local plans for private gatherings of nine people. Smaller parishes are finding this very difficult to comply with. As well, those over seventy years of age are still at risk in the community. I learned that each parish in our region (Gatton-Laidley, Esk, Ipswich, Booval, Boonah, Springfield and Goodna) is approaching the reality of lockdown differently. There is *no one size approach fits all*. The next step is to see what is proposed when larger gatherings are permitted and then act judiciously.

11. It is *National Reconciliation Week* across the nation at the moment and the 2020 title is *In this together*. How appropriate! A range of resources and links are available:

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

12. **46,000 YEAR OLD AUSTRALIAN ROCK SHELTERS BLASTED AWAY FOREVER BY ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN MINING COMPANY, RIO TINTO GROUP.**



In the Western Pilbara, WA, the only inland site in Australia showing human occupation continuing through the last Ice Age – *human shelters* – was blasted apart this week by mining company Rio Tinto.



The following article is significant: <https://theconversation.com/rio-tinto-just-blasted-away-an-ancient-aboriginal-site-heres-why-that-was-allowed-139466>

13. One of my colleagues sent this clip of *Be Not Afraid* being sung by many artists linked with Oregon Catholic Press (OCP). We sing this hymn, it is sung all over the country and the world, and it speaks to people at profound life moments such as grief, death and mourning. At this very time of global history, it has spoken to human fears and concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, there is a twist. The composer, Jesuit priest Bob Dufford, added a powerful fourth verse in 2007:

*And when the earth has turned beneath you  
and your voice is seldom heard.  
When the flood of gifts that blessed your life  
has long since ebbed away.  
When your mind is thick and hope is thin  
and dark is all around,  
I will stand beside you till the dawn.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF0DIpFOoBg>

Rita Ferrone writes an insightful piece on this beloved hymn and the stories behind the fourth verse: <https://www.praytelligblog.com/index.php/2020/05/28/be-not-afraid/>

14. I have been reflecting on many conversations I have had in the past three weeks. People like us have genuine concerns and anxieties about life in this very moment. Human hearts may break when we see line upon line and row upon row of graves across the globe. We are shocked to see ongoing violence in the so-called Land of the Free. We shudder when we hear of the rights of Chinese citizens being denied in Hong Kong and their call-out to the world for solidarity with them. Are we shaking our heads when we realise there are laws and practices for whites and other laws for 'coloured folks'? There seems to be an emerging awareness of 'new tasks' set before each and every community . . . tasks that are ripe for the picking when we can once again move about with greater freedom when safe to do so. There is renewed talk about *the common good*. *Alleluia!* I have heard some say that more than a few of the ways we had been doing things day-by-day may not have been for the common good . . . and that includes the church! From our gospel perspective, our response to people in need and especially people who are marginalised is the real marker of how seriously we engage in life for the common good. Words without action remain simply words; faith without action is dead.

*Veni Sancte Spiritus – Come, Holy Spirit.*

*John  
pastor  
Boonah Catholic community*