**Background Notes for Parents**

**About the Theme**

**Pentecost**

In this theme the children learn about the gift of the Holy Spirit and serving as a way of life.

**Easter Sunday** is the beginning of the **Easter Season** which lasts for 50 days. The celebration of the **Ascension** and **Pentecost** completes the Easter story.

**Ascension**

Forty days after Easter, the Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection and told them that he was going back to his Father in heaven. Before Jesus leaves them, he gives his followers a mission. Jesus tells his disciples to be his witnesses. They are to "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to everyone.” (Mark 16:15, 16)

The disciples cannot carry out their mission of spreading Jesus’ message to the ends of the earth without help. Therefore, Jesus tells his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they receive power from God. This power is God's Holy Spirit, who Jesus says will come after he goes away. After Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

**Pentecost**

Pentecost (or 'Shavuot' as it is called in Hebrew) is a Greek word meaning ‘fiftieth’. The Jewish ‘feast of weeks’ was held fifty days after the beginning of the grain harvest. It was a thanksgiving feast, celebrating the end of the harvest and commemorating the day God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jesus had told his disciples that it was important that they carry on his mission after he was gone. He promised he would give them the strength of his Spirit to do this. At Pentecost the Church celebrates Jesus fulfilling that promise to send the Holy Spirit to guide and help his disciples to understand all that he has taught them. It is celebrated 50 days (7 weeks) after Easter Sunday and brings the Easter season to an end.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost changed the frightened disciples into witnesses who could speak out with courage. The Holy Spirit strengthens the Church today in its mission to continue the work of Jesus and proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Christians are called each day to accept and live lives of joyful service through the power of the Spirit in their lives.

Christians believe that the Spirit of God is active in each person and, in a special way, in the community of believers, which is the Church. It is the work of the Spirit to help people to hear God’s message and to live Jesus’ way of service. The Feast of Pentecost is the celebration both of the gift of God’s Holy Spirit and the trust God places in people to be witnesses in the world. It is sometimes called ***the birthday of the Church*** because, filled with courage given by the Holy Spirit, the disciples went out among the people and began spreading Jesus’ message, thus marking the beginning of the Church.

**Year 5**

In the topic **‘Transformation’** the children will explore the transforming power of energy. They will learn about how Jesus appeared to the disciples after the resurrection; the message of Peter that the Holy Spirit will transform lives; how Paul’s life was transformed; how the Holy Spirit makes Christians children of God and how the Spirit transforms lives through the ‘fruits of the Spirit’. They will learn how the Pentecost Story continues in the Church today.

**Week 1:** In the topic ‘Transformation’ the children begin by exploring the transforming power of energy. They think about how these sources of energy are used around their home.

**Week 2:** Remind your child of the story of Pentecost

*‘When the harvest was being gathered in, on the feast of the first fruits, the friends of Jesus were not among the holiday crowds celebrating Pentecost in Jerusalem. Instead they were hidden away in a quiet room. Mary, the Mother of Jesus was with them.*

*Without the warmth of Jesus’ presence among them, they felt stranded and clueless. When Jesus had walked and talked with them, their hearts had burned within them; but now there was a death-like stillness and silence within them, which chilled their hearts and froze their power to act.*

*Then on that Pentecost morning, everything changed. The friends of Jesus knew all would be well.*

*They described the experience like this. They said it was as if a strong, powerful wind had filled the whole house and as if tongues of fire had spread out and touched each one of them. They felt alive as never before. The warmth of God’s love circulated through and among them, so that they felt compelled to rush out and share their joy with the whole world and to witness to the Good News of Jesus.*

*No longer tongue-tied, but with fiery conviction, the words tumbled out so fast and free, that in their excitement they sounded crazy, as if they’d lost their senses. At first people thought they were drunk.*

*It was Peter who controlled the situation; no longer afraid, he told the crowds how God had generously poured out the Spirit upon all so that they could speak out. A great change took place amidst the listening crowds.’*

( Based on Acts 2:1-43)

Help your child to understand that due to the power of the Holy Spirit and the witness of Peter, many thousands were baptised.

Saul had been persecuting these new Christians until his own transformation took place.

Remind your child of the story of the Conversion of Saul

‘*As I was travelling and coming near Damascus, about midday a bright light from the sky flashed suddenly round me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?”*

*“Who are you, Lord?” I asked. “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute,” he said to me. The men with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. I asked, “What shall I do, Lord?” and the Lord said to me, “Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that God has determined for you to do” I was blind because of the bright light, and so my companions took me by the hand and led me into Damascus.*

*In that city was a man named Ananias, a religious man who obeyed our Law and was highly respected by all the Jews living there. He came to me, stood by me, and said, “Brother Saul, see again!” At that very moment I saw again and looked at him. He said, “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see his righteous Servant, and to hear him speaking with his own voice. For you will be a witness for him to tell everyone what you have seen and heard. And now, why wait any longer? Get up and be baptised and have your sins washed away by praying to him.”*

(Based on Acts 22: 6-16)

Help your child to look at one of these paintings of this event and record their findings on the attached template.

<https://collections.artsmia.org/art/1526/the-conversion-of-saul-school-of-raphael>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Conversion_of_Saul_(Michelangelo)#/media/File:Conversion_of_Saint_Paul_(Michelangelo_Buonarroti).jpg>

<https://www.christianiconography.info/webmuseum/paulConversionFraAngelico.html>

**Week 3:** Share with your child the reading based on the letter of Paul to the Galatians.

‘*What I say is this: let the Spirit direct your lives, your selfish self is the opposite of what the Holy Spirit wants. The Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.’*

(Based on Galatians 5: 16-17, 22-23)

1. love

2. joy

3. peace

4. patience

5. kindness

6. goodness

7. faithfulness

8. humility

9. self-control

Talk about how these are lived out in everyday life

Help your child to create a simple PowerPoint or Word document or on paper with one fruit of the Spirit as a heading on each page. Your child can then find images from internet or from magazines of how these fruits can be used to transform life every day.

**Week 4:** Celebrate the story of Pentecost – what can you remember about the story? What message does it have for Christians today?

Mission Together and CAFOD have Pentecost liturgies you can download and celebrate.

<https://missiontogether.org.uk/pentecost/>

<https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Pentecost-primary-resources>