

## PENTECOST OR WHITSUNDAY:

Pentecost is a feast day celebrated 50 days after Easter. The word, Pentecost, is rooted in Greek for "fiftieth." You might observe the similarity in a word like "pentagon" which is a five-sided shape. In the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus explained that he was going to send the Holy Spirit.

A [feast](#) of the [universal Church](#) which commemorates the Descent of the [Holy Ghost](#) upon the [Apostles](#), fifty days after the [Resurrection of Christ](#), on the ancient [Jewish](#) festival called the "feast of weeks" or [Pentecost](#) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#)). Whitsunday is so called from the white garments which were worn by those who were [baptized](#) during the [vigil](#); Pentecost ("Pfingsten" in [German](#)), is the Greek for "the fiftieth" (day after [Easter](#)). Whitsunday, as a Catholic-[Christian Solemnity](#), dates back to the first century, although, there is no evidence that it was observed, as there is in the case of [Easter](#); the passage in [1 Corinthians 16:8](#) probably refers to the [Jewish feast](#). This is not surprising, for the [feast](#), originally of only one day's duration, fell on a [Sunday](#); besides, it was so closely bound up with [Easter](#) that it appears to be not much more than the termination of the [Paschal tide](#). That Whitsunday belongs to the [Apostolic](#) times is stated in the seventh, of the (interpolated) fragments attributed to [St. Irenæus](#). In [Tertullian](#) ([On Baptism 19](#)) the [festival](#) appears as already well established. The [Gallic](#) pilgrim gives a detailed account of the [solemn](#) manner in which it was observed at [Jerusalem](#) ("Peregrin. Silviae", ed. Geyer, iv). The [Apostolic Constitutions](#) ([Book V, Part 20](#)) say that Pentecost lasts one week, but, in the [West](#), it was not kept with an [octave](#) until at quite a late date. It appears from [Berno of Reichenau](#) (d. 1048) that it was a debatable point in his time whether Whitsunday ought to have an [octave](#). At present, it is of equal rank with [Easter Sunday](#). During the [vigil](#), formerly the [catechumens](#) who remained from [Easter](#) were [baptized](#). Consequently, the [ceremonies](#) on Saturday are similar to those on [Holy Saturday](#).

The [office](#) of Pentecost has only one [Nocturn](#) during the entire week. At [Terce](#) the "[Veni Creator](#)" is sung instead of the usual [hymn](#), because, at the third hour, the [Holy Ghost](#) descended. The [Mass](#) has a [Sequence](#), "[Veni Sancte Spiritus](#)" the authorship of which by some is ascribed to King Robert of [France](#). The [color](#) of the [vestments](#) is red, symbolic of the [love](#) of the [Holy Ghost](#) or of the tongues of fire. Formerly, the [law](#) courts did not sit during the entire week, and servile work was forbidden. A [Council of Constance](#) (1094) limited this prohibition to the first three days of the week. The [Sabbath](#) rest of Tuesday was abolished in 1771 AD, and in many missionary territories, also that of Monday; the latter was abrogated for the entire [Church](#) by [Pius X](#) in 1911. Still, as at [Easter](#), the [liturgical](#) rank of Monday and Tuesday of Pentecost week is a Double of the First Class.

In [Italy](#), it was customary to scatter rose leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the [miracle](#) of the fiery tongues; hence, in [Sicily](#) and elsewhere in [Italy](#), Whitsunday is called Pascha rosatum. The Italian name Pascha rossa comes from the red colors of the [vestments](#) used on Whitsunday. In [France](#), it was customary to blow trumpets during [Divine service](#), to recall the sound of the mighty wind which accompanied the Descent of the [Holy Ghost](#). In [England](#), the gentry amused themselves with horse races. The Whitsun Ales or merrymakings are almost wholly obsolete in [England](#). At these ales the Whitsun plays were performed. At [Vespers](#) of Pentecost in the [Oriental Churches](#), the extraordinary service of [genuflection](#), accompanied by long poetical [prayers](#) and [psalms](#), takes place. (Cf. Maltzew, "Fasten-und Blumen Triodion", p. 898 where the entire [Greco-Russian](#) service is given; cf. also Baumstark, "Jacobit. Fest brevier", p. 255.). On Pentecost, the [Russians](#) carry flowers and green branches in their hands.

### Sources:

<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15614b.htm> (retrieved May 22, 2023).

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