

Feedback on this lesson plan is welcome and encouraged [HERE](#).

Title of Lesson:	Lesson Number:	Key Verse(s)	Grade Level
Fishing the Universe – Pentecost Happened to Us!	12	Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:5-25	PreK K-1st Grade 2nd-3rd Grade 4th-6th ✓ Junior High Senior High

Lesson Length: 30 minutes (main) + 15 minutes (extension)


Key Ideas in this Lesson:

- At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and enabled them to bring the Gospel to the whole world. Our Chrismation is our personal Pentecost.

Key Vocabulary in this Lesson:

- Pentecost - the feast celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, celebrated 50 days after Pascha
 - Chrismation - one of the sacraments of initiation into the Orthodox Church, involving the anointing of the individual with Holy Chrism thus sealing them with the gift of the Holy Spirit

To prepare for this lesson, you will need:

Audio/Visual	Printed Materials	Craft/Activity Materials
(optional) computer, tablet, or phone to display: Information on the life of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr: https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2017/07/18/101915-grand-duchess-elizabeth 	Bibles Copy of the text/music for the Troparion of Pentecost in the version that is used in your parish The Miraculous Catch of Fish Icon, one copy printed in color Pentecost Icon, one copy printed in color (Optional) Image of Duchess Elizabeth of Hesse and icon of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr, one copy of each printed in color	

Opening Prayer:

Open with prayer. Suggestions for opening include **The Lord's Prayer** or the **Prayer Before Reading Scripture**.

"Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Your gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Your blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen".

Opening Activity: (5-10 mins)

Sing for/have the students listen to the Troparion of Pentecost.

- It is best to use the version that is familiar in *your* parish, as this will be the one the students will have heard AND it will help them recognize it when they hear it again. (Talk to your choir director/chanter/priest for help with this.)
- Write the text of this hymn on a whiteboard so that the students can follow along, even if they aren't singing. "Blessed art Thou O Christ our God, who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise, having sent upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them Thou hast fished the universe, O Lover of mankind, glory to Thee."

Ask the students, "Who are the fishermen?"

- The Apostles. Some of them were actually fishermen by trade (Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John.) Not all though, as Matthew was a tax collector.

Show the students the icon of The Miraculous Catch of Fish and ask if anyone remembers this story? Ask for a student volunteer to read Luke 5:1-11.

Discuss how fishermen are certainly wise in the way of fish. Then, ask a series of questions:

- Perhaps ask if any of the students, or their relatives, fish?
- But does that knowledge equip the fishermen to teach the world about Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection?
- What prepares the fishmen-now-Apostles for their new positions as preachers and teachers?
 - They were with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry through His resurrection and ascension. (Think back to previous lesson about what qualifications Matthias needed—Acts 1:22-23) Hint: in the previous lesson we heard of a promise that Jesus made to the Apostles. It's why they were staying in Jerusalem.
 - "He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5) Jesus also promises this other times as well John 14:15-17
- So, what prepare the fishermen-now-Apostles for their new positions as preachers and teachers?
 - The Holy Spirit!

Lesson Instruction: (15-20 mins)

A. Initial part of the lesson

Display the Pentecost icon and ask:

- Can you tell me what is happening in this icon?

(Really let them tell you as much as they can from what they see/what they remember of the story.)

Positively recognize the students' recalling of details. Then move into the story of Pentecost as it was recounted in the book of Acts and ask the series of questions.

Have a student read Acts 2:1-4.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Question: What happened to the Apostles?

- The Holy Spirit has finally come! They've received the Comforter, the Spirit of God, just like Moses and prophets had before them.
- They began to speak in languages other than their own (Hebrew/Aramaic)! Remember these are not (for the most part) highly educated people. They might have known a few words in Greek or Latin (enough to do business, like we might know a little Spanish, French or Arabic because of the people living around us) but not enough to preach!

Let's read on. . . Have a student(s) read Acts 2:5-25.

Question: What did the Apostles begin to do?

- Tell all the folks they met about "the wonderful works of God" (ie: Jesus and His death and resurrection) in many different languages!
 - This was such an amazing thing that the people hearing all the strange languages coming from the mouths of Jews from Jerusalem and Galilee just assumed they'd been drinking too much wine (not making sense).
- Share the good news that the message of Jesus Christ wasn't just for Jews but for everyone in the world (ie Gentiles—all non-Jews)
 - Jesus has come and is raised from the dead and everyone, everywhere is going to hear about it!

Continued Discussion:

- Peter goes to tell the assembled crowd all about Jesus - the prophecies concerning Him, His ministry, His death, and His Resurrection and calling many to come, to repent and to be baptized. And many did!
- That day, a fisherman from Galilee, spoke with the gift of the Holy Spirit and instead of a net full of fish, he brought about three thousand souls into the followers of Jesus. (Acts 2:41)

Question: What prepared the fishermen-now-Apostles for their new positions as preachers and teachers?

- The Holy Spirit!

B. *Second part*

Display the Icons of the Apostles.

Question: What is the difference between these men as *fishermen* and as *fishers of men*?

- The Holy Spirit! It is the descent of the Holy Spirit which gave the Apostles the strength and the words that that they needed to tell the world about Christ.

- “The Holy Spirit provideth all; overfloweth with prophecy; fulfilled the Priesthood; and hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath revealed the fishermen as theologians. He bringeth together all the laws of the Church. . . .” Vespers of Pentecost
- “. . .Thou didst send Thy glory, O compassionate one, to Thy Godhead-seeing Disciples, renewing in them an upright spirit. Wherefore, like a musical harp, they proclaimed their words unto all mystically, through the instrument of thy dispensation.” Third Kathismas, Matins of Pentecost
- Iconographical note: You may have noticed that in some icons the Apostles/Disciples do not have halos (rings of light around their faces, denoting their close relationship with God) and in others they do. This is because the event depicted was *before Pentecost*, so they had not yet received the Holy Spirit (ex. Calling of the Disciples or Holy Supper.) Sometimes they will have halos because the iconographer has chosen to play with time a little and foreshadow the coming of the Holy Spirit. (Icons are allowed to play with time.)

Closing Activity: (5-10 mins)

Question: So, if the Apostles are fishers of men—who are the fish?

- WE ARE!

The Holy Spirit is given not only to the disciples, but to all of humanity as well. Each of us has participated in Pentecost.

Question: When did we each receive the “gift of the seal of the Holy Spirit”?

- Our Chrismation! It’s the descent of the Holy Spirit upon us.
(Students might say baptism as well, and while for many of them Chrismation has occurred within the same service, it is, technically, separate.)

Question: Does anyone remember their own Chrismation (or Baptism)? Have they seen a Chrismation before?

- During the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation the priest anointed us with Chrism (a special holy oil) and prays “. . .Do Thou, the same Master, grant also unto him/her the seal of the gift of Thy holy, almighty, and adorable Spirit, and participation in the holy Body and precious blood of Thy Christ. . .”

The priest then makes the sign of the cross, with the oil on our brows, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, chest, hands, feet, and back each time saying, “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” and everyone else in the Church responds “Seal!”

Conclusion:

Just like to the Apostles, the Holy Spirit has come upon us as well.

- No, it doesn’t mean that we’ll all start speaking in different languages, but it *does* mean that we all have the ability to show the light of Christ to the world.
- We often call Pentecost the “birthday of the Church” and it is because *this* is when the community begins to grow from the few followers of Jesus in Jerusalem to a community of believers all over the world—including here.

What will the Apostles do now? They are prepared for their mission, but there is a lot more to do. Stay tuned and find out.

To extend this lesson for additional time...

Additional activity idea:

1. *St. Elizabeth the New Martyr*. Have any of the students seen a picture of a saint that wasn't an icon? We often think about saints as they are depicted in their icons (and rightly so) but in the case of some saints, we can get an image of these individuals *before* they became saints.

Display the image of Princess Elisabeth of Hesse and by Rhine and explain: This is Elisabeth, Princess of Hesse and by Rhine (in Germany). She was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England and later, when she married Grand Duke Sergius of Russia and converted to Orthodoxy, became Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna (a pretty *grand* title). After the death of her husband, she gave up her rich life and became a nun and founder of the convent of Ss. Mary and Martha where she and other women ministered to the poor and sick, including soldiers. When Russian was taken over by the Bolsheviks (communists) she was imprisoned and killed because of her faith.

Display the icon of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr beside the image of Princess Elisabeth of Hesse and by Rhine and explain: These are two pictures of the same woman, but where one might show the light shining off jewels and pearls, the other shows the light of a soul filled with the Holy Spirit.

For more information on the life of St. Elizabeth:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2017/07/18/101915-grand-duchess-elizabeth>



Background Resources for Teachers:

- “Wearing of the green.” There may be a lot of extra green around the Church around the time of Pentecost. (Clergy vestments, altar cloths, plants/tree branches, and even people wearing green—depending on cultural traditions). This is because the color green is associated with the Holy Spirit because it is the “breath of life” causing all things to grow and flourish—just like plants.
- Jewish Feast of Pentecost: Why were there so many people from all different places in Jerusalem? They were all there, like the Apostles, to celebrate the feast of Pentecost—50 days after Passover—a remembrance of the God’s giving the 10 commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- What does the Holy Spirit look like? The Holy Spirit does not have one incarnate form—like Jesus does, but is depicted in as many ways as it has appeared. Can you think of how many different ways the HS has appeared to us? Examples include: A dove—Jesus’ Baptism, Tongues of Fire—Pentecost, Wind/Breath—Pentecost and Genesis.
- Troparion or Apolytikion? The song of a particular feast or saint (the “theme song” if you will) is referred to as the Troparion. At the end of the Vespers service, we sing a series of hymns called “Apolytikia” (end hymns) and when a Troparion is sung in this place, it may be labeled as an Apolytikion, as it is being sung as the end of the service.



The Miraculous Catch of Fish
St. Herman Orthodox Christian Church in Fairbanks, Alaska

Pentecost



Pentecost

Jesus' friends were gathered together to pray. They heard the sound of blowing wind. The sound filled the room, and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven. Tongues of fire were above them. They were able to speak different languages and share the good news of Jesus Christ with everyone. That day is when the Church began, so Pentecost is the birthday of the Church!



Grand Duchess Elizaveta (Elizabeth) Feodorovna
Charles Bergamasco, 1885



St. Elizabeth the New Martyr
Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco, California