

PFINGSTEN / PENTECOST

Pentecost



An icon of the Christian Pentecost, in the Greek Orthodox aesthetic tradition but prepared for a Western Christian audience using the Roman alphabet. This is the Icon of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. At the bottom is an allegorical figure, called *Kosmos*, which symbolizes the world.

Observed by Roman Catholics, Old Catholics, Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglicans and other Christians.

Type Christian

Significance Celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus

Celebrations Religious (church) services, Festive meals, Processions, Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Folk customs, Dancing, Spring & woodland rites, Festive clothing.

Observances Prayer, Vigils, Fasting (pre-festival), Novenas, Retreats

Holy Communion, Litany

Date Easter + 49 days

Related to Shavuot, historically and symbolically; Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday which lead up to Easter; and Ascension, Trinity Sunday, and Corpus Christi which follow it.

Pfingsten in Early Summer

At the end of May and the beginning of June, spring turns into early summer. The trees are full of leaves; the grain and other crops are thriving. The next harvest is still far in the future. This is the time of Pentecost, or Whitsun, which is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The word "Pentecost" as well as the German word for it, "Pfingsten," are derived from the Greek "pentekoste," the fiftieth day (after Easter). At Pentecost, the Christian church commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles after the ascension of Jesus Christ. In the Western church, it has been celebrated on this date since the beginning of the 4th century.

Because of the mild weather which usually prevails at this time of the year, Pentecost is generally regarded in Germany as an occasion for family outings — with all which that entails in today's age of the family car. Churches, house doors, and even cars are often adorned with fresh green twigs, called "Maien." This is a custom that has been observed ever since the Middle Ages. It is one of the old, pre-industrial customs that have been preserved to this day.