

In the Name of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We are charged with preaching the gospel, and yet it is a challenge to preach about the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? What is this Day of Pentecost all about?

The image of Jesus we can understand very, very clearly. Born a baby..like you and me. Grown into adulthood...nothing unusual there. And he suffers...we get that.

But the Holy Spirit? How do we imagine the Holy Spirit?

Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples **like** a dove. Unfortunately, we have confused that image over the centuries...and artists have depicted the Holy Spirit **as** a dove. The dove image in scripture actually illustrates the nature of the **coming** of the Holy Spirit.

During part of our seminary education, we studied the seemingly endless, and exhaustive efforts of the theologians of the earliest church. Praying, meditating upon, and debating with each other over the identity of the very person of the Holy Spirit. And I remember feeling a sense of waste, and frustration. It was probably necessary to metaphorically “flesh out” the perceived revelation of the Holy Spirit by the church.

But...here is the great point of today...what makes this great feast Day of Pentecost like few others. In my view, just about as great a celebration in the church as Christmas Day, and Easter as the Day of Resurrection. The Holy Spirit was sent to the church....not to be. Not to be labeled. Not to be identified. Not to be named. And I think not even to be just revered.

No...the great point of today...the Day of Pentecost...is the Holy Spirit was sent to the church...to do.  
To do.

Up to this point, the entire body of holy scripture is the story of the covenant of God with God's people, Israel. How they ebbed and flowed, in fits and spurts, with two steps forward and occasionally just as many back. All to the point when Jesus appears, like a finely focused, searing laser beam..essentially being the voice of God telling Israel, “If you can not lead in the way you were taught, then follow me”.

It is within the collective understanding of the church...as self revealed by God...that Jesus, in being that concentrated laser of light, as the Messiah...is resurrected. Reborn in a way that we do not comprehend...being the mystery of faith that we proclaim in the Eucharistic prayer. And that rebirth affects each and every one of us who believes in, and follows him.

But the “how and when” we are affected, is the whole point of today's great feast day.

Because we are not affected by the Resurrection **only** upon our bodily death. We are **not** here...on this earth, and in this life...to be spectators. To just “punch the clock” and go through a mere existence,

taking breaths of air just to pass the time until we do so no more.

We are here to act....in the very image of God. We are here to move....as children of God.

We are here to do.

And the Holy Spirit **explodes** the Body of Christ exponentially. Forget “like a dove”. Think “Big Bang”...the way that science describes the continuing expansion of God’s creation. Moving. Growing. Expanding millions of light years...beyond our capacity to calculate, let alone understand.

This day allows **me** to live into the covenant. This is not a third-party drama, watching the actors on the stage or on the tube. Like the apostles, you and I do not just sit at the feet of Jesus any longer. He said that we will do far greater things than he.

But it is fair, and honest, to look around, and we appear somewhat older...and worn...and tired...wondering how we as a parish can handle what is already on our plate, let alone more. So, ponder this:

This particular church has served this part of God’s creation for many, many decades. Through thick and thin, God has provided. God has always...and will always provide you..the latest saints in residence in this holy place...with what is needed to meet the needs of our world, as we follow the great commission of Christ, being pushed by the Holy Spirit. God will always provide, and provide abundantly.

But we also have a very big disconnect. We tend to think and see people of action in faith as big, big dreamers who somehow are able to tackle, with apparent ease, the world’s greatest needs and ills. Like the world-wide missionary assistance programs through Episcopal Relief and Development, for example. Every Christian denomination has a mission outreach arm like that. And, when the need arises, they group together to make a bigger impact. Super Storm Sandy relief. Haiti. Hurricane Katrina. Even the massive relief efforts that are continuing right this minute to address the horrors of suffering in Ukraine.

Our disconnect is that when we think of and see those people responding in those ways, they appear as people of energy, vitality, youthful strength and enthusiasm....and we here, with all due respect but honesty as well, are people generally who appear to be older, ill or exhausted, spent.

“What”, we ask, “can the Holy Spirit expect me to do? Me, who is bent over and tired out? Who has more health issues than those people I see getting treatment on TV. What is this priest talking about...that I am here “to move”, “to do”? Well, we are invited to look to scripture for answers and inspiration. Moses told God he thought Aaron was a more gifted speaker and better able to lead but, as always, God makes do. Abraham and Sarah were childless and yet older than anyone here today but, as always, God makes do.

The truth is that the people of this parish already “do”, in many different ways...although more subtle. With less fanfare. Under a far smaller spotlight.

We had a few who served and currently serve in various public examples in the traditional sense of Christian mission. But if we honestly ask ourselves, “What do I really do?”, I think that we come closer, and more intimately, into the life we are called by God to live.

Taking care of, or offering assistance, to family members who are frail, infirm, alone.

Doing the “behind the scenes”, real work that has to be done to support and sustain this sacred space so that this gathering of brothers and sisters in Christ have a place to worship God, if nothing else.

Tending to the support, or advocacy, or maintenance of others outside of this building, in the “quote” secular” unquote world.

What the Day of Pentecost is REALLY about is that it is the day we focus on what we should do everyday as followers of Christ, and that is realizing that the life given to us by God is not to be watched. Not to be coddled. Not to be protected, or saved for a rainy day, or even hoarded. But rather the life given to us by God is to be shared, to be used, to be exercised.

That what we should do everyday as followers of Christ is to ask God, “Lord, help me to be the person you would have me be. Help me to do whatever it is that you would have me do in your name.”

I am no different than anyone here. You certainly know that. God did not lead me through a formation into ordination while I was a full-time professional in another field. God did not bring me to this place, in this time....all to sit on my all-too-wide posterior, and watch the moon rise and fall in the sky.

I am here...because God is here. And I feel in the depths of my heart that God is pleased that we gather here and give thanks....even us, as broken and beat up and worn down as we are.

So on this Day of Pentecost, I say back to God, “Open up. Move. Push us, and help us, even as we are.”

God will provide. Because it is God...as the Holy Spirit...that will nudge, and poke, and lean on us, ever so gently. As long as we, in our lives outside of this building, continue to give glory and praise to God in our actions and intentions and expressions, God will call and will provide. Why? Because it is good, and a right, and a joyful thing. Always and everywhere...for you to be, who you were made to be.”

The Holy Spirit brings us into the body of Christ. Now, let us leave it to God how to live into that. Living joyfully. Abundantly. In the innumerable ways, throughout our individual lives, that we can rejoice within the presence of God as the Father, and as the Son, **and** as the Holy Spirit.

Amen.