

Pentecost 2015 Aurora.

Pentecost Sunday as described in the reading from Acts could be a script for special effects in some Hollywood film. The rushing of winds, floating tongues of fire over the heads the apostles, gifts of speaking in foreign languages and people hearing their own language in their heads.

The telling of such events to early disciples would have been awe-inspiring, stunning and miraculously convincing. The persuasive power of these “special effects” coupled with the exciting words of the apostles caused thousands of people in Jerusalem for the harvest festival to become believers in the resurrection of Jesus.

We are a people no longer easily impressed: in an age of technological wonders, we've come to expect regular improvements in the "stuff" of our lives. (Consider, for example, the improvement in special effects in film. What amazed us twenty years ago looks almost silly today.) It takes more and more to astonish us, and yet astonishing things happen quietly in nature, in communities, in the life of our churches every day, whether we take note or not.

The message of Pentecost is that God is giving new life and a new community for all people, the very gift of the Church. Being the Church is a new way of living for those who would follow Jesus in every land and in every age. Not just some kinds of people, but ALL different kinds of people, in all different places, different languages and customs, different cultures and backgrounds and experiences, different abilities and gender and races and orientations, all different kinds of people, beloved of God and filled with God's Spirit.

Our Pentecost celebration is still a reminder that God's Holy Spirit is given freely to all people with no respect for race, culture, socioeconomic standing, gender or any other distinguishing mark to differentiate one person from another. Human fears separate us from each other. But when filled with the Holy Spirit we are restored to a unity with one another. In God we are one. God's plan for creation was for a paradise where all living creatures lived in harmony, peace and unity.

Jesus promises his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to accomplish our destiny. The building blocks of such a world are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. These are the qualities of Jesus that the Holy Spirit develops in our lives as we grow in our faith. That's who we are to become as Christians. The Holy Spirit transforms the believer into the image of Christ and obliges the Christian to share in the Church's apostolic and missionary activity.

The Holy Spirit compels us to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves. One way we do this is by reaching out to the unloved, the hard to love, and the rejected in our midst and loving them, emulating our Heavenly Father's love for us who are called by His name.

Today we will shortly do a new thing here and now. We will celebrate with two men who have found love in each other. For the first time in this sanctuary, we will bless the marriage of two men. There was a time when such a thing was unthinkable. But now reason is overcoming error and misunderstanding. Bigotry and prejudice are divisive forces based on fear and hatred.

Every time we who are baptized into the Body of Christ approach the Eucharist, we are reminded of God's love for us. It is around the holy altar table with our brothers and sisters in Christ that our Heavenly Father graciously accepts us as living members of his own Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and feeds us with spiritual food in the blessed Sacrament.

Through the Holy Spirit, we welcome into our midst all people, inviting them to become family. When we welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives we will be transformed into the image of Christ.

So here today, the gift of the Holy Spirit is again available, given to renew us today and stir up within us those spiritual gifts which God has so richly and freely given to us when we were baptized into Christ's holy Church. It is here today to sustain and strengthen Mitch and Ryan, and you and me.

Let us pray.

"On Pentecost, may you find your heart singing with the spirit of God, your ears humming with the voice of the Spirit speaking in a language that reaches deep into your soul, and wisdom dawning on your mind so that the shackles that have hardened around your mind may be broken. May God's voice and language set you free. May our communities and churches experience the coming of God's Spirit, anticipate it with joy and hope. Let us give in to it with love, so that when the day is done all the world may know the love of God because of each and every one of you."

Amen."