

## I Will Pour out My Spirit to All People

Texts: Acts 2:1-21

1 Corinthians 12: 13a-13 (Series A. The Day of Pentecost) Ps. 102:24-34, 35

John 20:19-23

### Prayer;

*When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were altogether in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind... Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability... then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. [Acts 2:1-4, 21]*

The waiting is over. Fifty Days after Easter, Ten Days after the Ascension, comes Pentecost, the feast of Holy Spirit: the *Birth Day* of the Christian Church. The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek for "fiftieth" and carries much ancient history and tradition along with its place on the Christian calendar.

On the Jewish calendar, this ancient feast is Shavuot and follows 50 days after Passover. It is believed the Torah was revealed by God to Moses who gave it to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, this is commonly considered to be its primary purpose.

This day is known as Whitsunday in Ireland and the United Kingdom, often wearing *white* robes, in Ghana church members will mostly wear white clothing.

Today's passage from the Scriptures certainly gives some credence to this celebration. Shavuot may perhaps be another reason the disciples of Jesus were gathered. Being together, comforted by a familiar ritual, they waited for the unknown sign promised by the resurrected Jesus in his final in-person teachings.

Remember, just in a month and a half ago, the disciples had experienced the "Last Supper," the arrest and violent execution of Jesus, his resurrection, various appearances to them, his ascension, and their own grief, fear, and uncertainty at these incomprehensible turns of events.

Here they are gathered together again without quite knowing what was next or when. Suddenly a sound like a violent wind and tongues of fire resting on them, as they began speaking in multiple languages, of course they were bewildered, astonished, and amazed! And then, their ministry began in earnest, taking Christ's message far and wide.

Today we are blasé. We know the story too well; we are immune to the thrill and amazement of it. The churches are packed at Christmas and Easter yet come Pentecost, all seems routine even if a "Festival Eucharist" is celebrated. I guess, when we have forgotten the third member of the Trinity. *The Holy Spirit*.

Of course, Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are all critical to our Christian faith. We couldn't have gotten to this point in our faith without Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. But it was the arrival of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, that fired up the Apostles of old.

Fired up people like St. Ansgar, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, and countless missionaries. It was by the Holy Spirit that let few Danes who established St. Ansgar congregation.

That was the moment the Holy Spirit sent them around the known world proclaiming Christ, converting, and making the way for *us* to be the Church here, now, more than 2,000 years later. Without *that* Pentecost, would we still know only about Christmas, Good Friday, or Easter?

It is in these current times with fear, frustration, anger, and intolerance swirling around in ever more intense and too often violent levels, that we must take the time to stop and read the texts with new understanding, a fresh awareness of what it must have been like for those in that Upper Room.

From the devastation of the Crucifixion, to the confusion and the wonder of the resurrection, to the joy of his return among them, and then suddenly mystified by his ascension, now, only 10 days after his final leaving...they are waiting...and wondering...for *what* they are unsure.

For us, today is the day to move beyond merely knowing the story. Today is the day of knowing that the Spirit is within us ~ to be as overwhelmed, and dazzled and even as stunned as the Apostles ~ and to be revived and excited.

God's grace, and the love and Salvation of Christ is ours. This is the day that the LORD has made! Let us truly rejoice and be glad and joy-filled, and *alive* in it! After all, what else is faith for?

On this fiftieth day after Easter, let us accept and welcome the extraordinary gifts and abilities bestowed on us, chosen for and unique to each of us. Let us be eager and enthusiastic in embracing all that a true life of faith calls us to be and to do, to live fully in the belief in Christ that we claim to have.

Let us strive to be all that Jesus and his imperfect disciples have shown us that we can be. We, too, celebrate, with our Jewish heritage, the giving of the Law on Sinai as our rules of life, transformed by Jesus into the *Greatest Commandment* [see Matthew 22:37-39].

It was on this day that God's Spirit became available to *all people*, not only a chosen few but to *all nations, all tribes*, all people of *all tongues*. The Holy Spirit which resides in us allows the manifestation of our gifts that God has given us. And yes, it is true we all do have gifts. They are varied, but they all contribute to the building of God's church.

It is imperative to know that you and I "*cannot by our own reason or strength believe in the Lord, or come to him*", therefore God graciously provides the power with which we are able to perform our service. That's what Pentecost is all about.

The story of Ezekiel's *Valley of dry bones*. The people of Israel are described here as dry, dead bones – they are in exile far away from their home land – dead in spirit, and in hope as they saw no relief in sight. Against such a background Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel by God was sent to proclaim words of deliverance.

He was sent to bring forth life out death, He was sent to bring forth life out death, meaning to their existence, hope, and faith. Without the Holy Spirit, we too are powerless against the forces that seek to bring us down. We are revived many ways with many gifts.

It is the Holy Spirit that whispers to ears when we are discouraged and down trodden, Holy Spirit gives us faith to believe, when all we see around us is doubt. The Holy Spirit says to each and everyone of us be of good cheers for I am with you for, I am the God of the mountain and God of the valley.

Jesus said, *“If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.”* Pentecost is a gift to us, to all people, we have been empowered by this very beautiful gift to be the people God intended us to be.

“We have been given different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” Amen.

On this *Birthday of the Church\**, let us seize the opportunity again to live as Children of God, using the language of love with each other and especially with those who aren't so lovingly inclined. The old has gone away, only love remains, and we are alive today Christ called us out them dry bones!

Christmas is wonderful, and lovely, and blessed. Easter is fragrant and joyful, but with Pentecost comes the true gift that brings fire to our souls and lifts our life's journey to a new level! There God puts a new song in our souls. Get Fired Up!  
**Amen.**

May 28, 2023

➤4◀