

Pentecost 2010

May 23, 2010

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1st Reading: Acts 2:1-11

And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...

Psalm 104

Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters: no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

Gospel: John 20:19-23

He breathed on them...

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I was at a cub scout banquet a few years ago and a dad sitting next to me said, "Father, you'll appreciate this, Tommy wants to be a priest." I, of course, made a fuss, saying how great that is. Then his dad asked Tommy to tell me why he wanted to be a priest. Tommy said, "Because I don't want to have to kiss some girl in front of the church." It reminds me of a sign in a nursery. Above the row of cribs with the babies the sign read: "Not all will rest, but all will be changed."

This is Pentecost, the feast of the Church because we who have been baptized and confirmed received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as "wind" and "fire." It is the wind and fire of change.

"Wind" is unpredictable; it blows where it will. Once I was in San Francisco and I was walking up a steep hill. The sun felt hot, I was sweating, and I thought about what great shape I'd be in if I walked those hills all the time. I was looking forward to reaching the end of the block to rest. When I finally got to the top and walked out from the building that ran along the sidewalk, a sudden whoosh of wind hit me hard from the side street. It was freezing cold. I could see the fog

coming up the hill from the bay carried by that strong wind. When the wind is strong it brings quick changes in the weather. I guess we Floridians know about that.

Pentecost is the feast of the mysterious movement of God. Each year it is an invitation to be attentive to God's presence in our lives. The Spirit of God came as unexpectedly as the hilltop wind to the followers of Jesus in that Upper Room. With the rushing wind came a surge of courageous energy that hadn't been there before. The Spirit is already present within us; we just don't when that powerful wind will blow us full-force into action. The poet, Jessica Powers wrote that the person who experiences the wind of the Spirit "turns like a wandering weathervane toward love."

We have models:

+Our Catholic High School is named for St. Francis of Assisi. He was a spoiled rich kid. I think today he'd be the freshman showing up at the university driving his own Esplanade loaded with a big flat screen tv; surround sound speakers and all the electronic toys to party with his friend for six years of undergraduate studies. As much as he plans to play it would take him the six years. But the wind of the spirit changed Francis life and the world as a result. His imagination still inspires the church, he is the one who thought of Christmas mangers and the Stations of the Cross. The religious order that follows his rule still serves throughout the world.

+Katherine Drexel was another spoiled rich kid. The daughter of one of the most prominent and richest families in America; she was raised like a princess in Philadelphia. Her mother was a Bouvier—remember Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy—same family. Katherine used to go with her dad in their private railroad car when he went to visit various business interests he owned in the south and west. She saw the poor newly freed slaves in the south and the poor newly contained American Indians on their reservations in the west. Because of their connections, her family visited the Pope on one of their European trips. She impetuously—like the spoiled princess she was—told the Pope he needed to send Sisters to teach the poor blacks and Indians in the United States. He told

her she should start the religious order herself and the Spirit blew. She founded the Blessed Sacrament Sisters and they went south and west to educate the underprivileged non-whites.

+Mother Teresa was a middle aged Sister teaching in an exclusive girls school. She had an established good reputation and it was a fairly cushy life for a nun. The Spirit blew and we know what happened.

When the wind of the Spirit blows, the force changes the world!

The Spirit is also represented by fire. We know how forest rangers have “controlled burns” to burn all the fallen limbs and tangled brush on the forest floor and we all know the power of fire. The fire of the Spirit enkindles a desire to be the best we can be. The Spirit of fire prods us to change what we need to change, like all the isms. I believe the 12 step programs are inspired by the Holy Spirit. People who acknowledge that they are not in control and ask God to take over and walk that walk the rest of their lives are burning away the debris in their lives. The fiery light pierces the darkness of compulsive behaviors.

This is Pentecost. Maybe the wind is energizing you; maybe the fire is brightening your reality. The Spirit is already on board, we better get ready for our own good news!!