

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-21

On the day of Pentecost, around the year 30 A.D., 120 followers of a man named Jesus were gathered together in Jerusalem.

Suddenly the Spirit of God filled each one of them, and marked them with tongues of fire. On that day the Church was born. In less than 300 years, that small, insignificant Jewish sect became the official religion of the entire Roman Empire, and today the Church of Jesus Christ circles the globe and numbers some one billion members.

Today is Pentecost, one of the four major festivals of the church year. Today we celebrate the coming of God's Holy Spirit into the lives of men and woman, today we celebrate the birthday of the church. But, if we didn't come to church today, if we maybe hadn't read our daily devotional booklet, or perhaps if we hadn't looked at the church calendar, we would not have known this was a major festival of the church year. Today is just as important as Christmas, Easter, and the Ascension, but for some unknown reason, this festival in the church year goes by almost unnoticed. Why is that?

Maybe because we have a difficult time getting a handle on the Spirit of God. Maybe, we don't understand what exactly happened on this day. And maybe, talk about the Spirit is not so sweet as talk about a baby born in a manger, angels singing in the heavens, gifts being passed about and shepherds tending their sheep on quiet hillsides.

Maybe Pentecost doesn't get so much attention because we have

not found a way to commercialize it, we don't turn Pentecost into a spectacular entertainment, or into a national holiday, so it goes unnoticed.

However, this festival is very important for the life of the church, for our lives. The Spirit of God is not something we should fear, nor something we should ignore, but the Holy Spirit is God's presence in this world. It is the same presence that was moving over the face of the earth when God created this world in which we live. It is that same presence that took the form of a baby born in a manger in Bethlehem, it is the same spirit of God that walked the earth for 33 years, teaching, healing, proclaiming the love of God for all people. And now, today, it is that same spirit that is with us, it is God's spirit alive and well on this earth, working through His people, the church, to bring His love into the brokenness of this world.

The source of the Holy Spirit is God. We believe in the Trinity, God the Father who creates, God the Son who redeems and God the Holy Spirit, who gathers, calls, enlightens and makes His people holy. God is one, but at the same time he shows himself in three different ways. It is this third part of the Trinity, this third manifestation of God that we celebrate on this Day of Pentecost.

Jesus talked about the Counselor coming to lead the disciples in truth, and to convict the world of sin, and to bring God's righteousness into the lives of people who have experienced the brokenness of this world. This spirit is in each of our lives.

God's spirit comes to us in our Baptism, and remains with us as we grow in the knowledge and truth of the God who loves us. The power of God's Spirit came to earth on Pentecost. This power can be used in at least two ways: it can be unleashed, or it can be harnessed. The Holy Spirit works both ways. At

Pentecost, He exploded on the scene; His presence was like "tongues of fire". Thousands were affected by one burst of God's power. But He also works through the church, the institution God began, to tap the Holy Spirit's power for the long haul. Through worship, fellowship, and service, Christians are provided with staying power.

Through our Baptism, we have obtained the staying power of God to see us through all the ups and downs of life. The Spirit of God comes to us in our Baptism, and remain with us, calling us to worship, bringing us to service, gathering us together as a body, enlightening us about the truth of God, and continually making us holy before God. All this happens day in and day out in our lives. This spirit is quietly at work each day we live. The Spirit is there with us as we go about our day. It is there with us as we manage our business, as we raise our family, as we work for another person. This spirit of God is there in all that we do. The Holy Spirit brings His power into our lives in a quiet and peaceful way.

God's Holy Spirit comes quietly, it comes in slowly, with enough power so that we might do the job God has called each of us to do. The Holy Spirit is a power, a force, and for many an untapped force, in each of our lives, that is there to give us the power to live the kind of lives, to be the kind of people, that God intended us to be.

It is this same spirit that convicts us of our sins, shows us that we really aren't as good as we think we are, and it is that same Spirit who comes with that mercy, with the righteousness of God and washes away our sins.

It is this Spirit that comes into our lives, into the church, to allow us to spread God's message of love to all people. It is this Spirit which points, not to itself, but to Christ. It is this Spirit

which makes the church, the Body of Christ, the most unique organization on the face of the earth. The power of the Holy Spirit was brought into the world this day nearly 2000 years ago, and that power is still present today through us and within the church.

When God sends forth the Holy Spirit amazing things happen: barriers are broken, communities are formed, opposites are reconciled, unity is established, disease is cured, addiction is broken, cities are renewed, races are reconciled, hope is established, people are blessed, and church happens.

Today the Spirit of God is present, causing gossipers to shut up, feuding people to make up, sleeping people to wake up, lukewarm people to fire up, dry bones to shake up, and pew potatoes to stand up! But most of all, Christ the Savior of all the world is lifted up. So, please go from this sacred space today filled with God's Holy Spirit.

AMEN.