

**Day of Pentecost**  
12 June 2011

Acts 2:1–21  
Psalm 104:24–34, 35b  
1 Corinthians 12:3b–13  
John 7:37–39  
Year C

Earlier in the gospel of John, chapter 3 Jesus says, “the wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8)

That’s just scary. I’m sorry, but I don’t like surprises, or ambiguity.

The Spirit blows wherever and whenever she wants? Please!

Anyone and everyone accessing the divine, when I’ve done all this studying, memorized Luther’s Small Catechism, and have **my** place up front?

The next thing you know, you’ll say children should be heard and not only seen.

The next thing you know, you’ll say we should listen to the dreams the old Swedes in the back of the church.

And, **and** that a plethora of cultures and ideas are gifts to us, like variety is the spice of life or something.

What if in the church we blessed people’s passion for faith?

What if in the church we valued multiple ways of putting our faith into action?

What if the church we front-loaded Spirit talk and a life in the Spirit?

Wouldn’t it be one big mess?

**Clean-up on St. Ronan Street.**

Pentecost, the fiftieth Day of Easter, is rooted in the Jewish Festival honoring the gift of the Torah to Moses. On that day of Pentecost, regaled by Luke in the book of Acts, there were a **plethora** of people descended on Jerusalem. It was like the Arts and Ideas Festival had come to town, perhaps on a smaller scale. It was like the Keyl Open House, perhaps on a larger scale. On Pentecost, the fiftieth day of Passover, Jews dispersed to the hinterlands had come home, each to claim God’s hold on their way of life in some way, if not all ways. They filled the inns. They stayed with cousins. They camped on the Mount of Olives. And the apostles, the twelve (not counting Judas, but adding the replacement Matthias) had been waiting.

Throughout the fifty days they had the witness of Mary that she had seen the Lord. They had heard of the experiences of Jesus breaking bread on the road to Emmaus and breaking open the scriptures. They had seen Jesus right in front of them, body intact and not a ghost, who asked them “what’s cookin’” and who chomped on fish. And, **and** they had seen Jesus ascend into the universe.

Now that’s a lot to digest. That’s a lot of new life to take in, life that means the equation of death does not add up the way it used to be. That’s a lot of reorientation that somehow God is changing the ground we have been used to walking on, like in re-reading Genesis to Malachi we see Extreme Makeover: God Edition and we get to ooh and ahh over the big reveal.

But what is next, you may ask. After walking with the teacher, after learning the ways of the kingdom turning the empire’s values of oppression and power over others on its head, after recognizing God’s justice trumps the world’s justice even in the face of unfathomable suffering, after looking not only **to** Jesus but **at** Jesus before he died and after he died, after Jesus disappeared from sight you better believe the apostles, the men and women, including Jesus’ mother Mary did a whole lot of praying, and what was included in these prayers was “what’s next, God?”

God did not answer in some kind of polite way, “Why I’m glad you asked, Phil.” God acted. In a big way. As in **fire and wind, Holy Spirit**, as in a plethora of preaching, a plenitude of proclamation, you know what I mean, a whole lot of speechifying in a variety of languages about how God has shown up, in the world.

Well, now, on the Day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day of Easter, Peter takes over the room. I mean, he winds up and begins sounding like a whole new Peter, not the one who walks on the water toward Jesus but then sinks like a stone, not like the one proudly says to Jesus “I am ready to go to prison and to death!” then three times in a row when asked if he associates with Jesus, knows Jesus, or was with Jesus says “Jesus, I don’t know him, never heard of him, don’t know what you are talking about.”

Now, fifty days after Easter, on the day of Pentecost, Peter goes on and on and on. He’s on fire. He’s got pipes to speak. The fisherman gains the skills of a rhetorician.

The Holy Spirit gets loose. The Holy Spirit gets lavished on all within earshot. The Holy Spirit gets poured out like a river of living water, out of control, so that (and *listen closely*) **everyone** gets it, they get that the Jesus’ movement is continuing in them, that they don’t have to wait anymore for instructions, for the right moment, for the right leader, for a sign from heaven. It’s already there. It’s already here.

The holying Spirit is at work at Bethesda, in New Haven, where we live and breathe, and not only that, but it blows around and lights up wherever and whenever the world needs an Extreme Makeover: God Edition.

**Clean up, in Syria, Palestine, Congress, Montana, West Springfield, and my house.**

## **And your house.**

Like the patchwork quilt on the altar today, we are here in one place from the places to which we have scattered throughout the week. Like the many and varied followers of Christ from all times and places, we have been infused with the gift of the Spirit at our baptisms. In fact, the invoking of the Spirit is a repeatable rite. The Spirit is called upon at Baptism. The Holy Spirit's gifts are re-invoked at Confirmation. When two people join in a partnership as one, the gifts of the Spirit are called upon again in a marriage blessing. When you fall ill, when you are failing, when you are depleted of energy, it's just possible that someone will place their hands on you and ask the Spirit to bring healing, new life, a realization of the promises of God, who raised Jesus.

The Spirit is loose and dances around the bread and wine of our weekly gatherings, setting us to our work to bring the Jesus' movement forward to our city and neighborhood, to any who will listen and not think that we have drunk too much wine.

I invite you to revel in Pentecostal activity. Expect God to show up in a big way through our common prayer, our common striving to live as Christ lived, in our weekly plethora of proclamation here and our weekly scattering to share the Spirit. Share the Spirit with one another today.

I once learned something about the ancient church from my graduate work with Father Gerry Austin. This is what he taught me: In the ancient church, they knew that the Spirit was within each one of the baptized, that the Spirit was inhaled deeply by all who had drunk of that living water, that outpouring of grace at their initiation into the community of Christ. So when it was time for the kiss of peace, when the many who were one body greeted one another with a holy kiss, it was the exhaling of the Spirit already within. The Spirit was let loose by the assembly, exchanging breath. So the next time we share peace, imagine the Spirit dancing around this room, as you do-si-do with your fellow baptized. The next time you offer reconciliation to anyone, imagine that the Spirit is pouring out of you. The next time you pray, the next time you speak, whenever you offer yourself as if you are invoking the divine, remember that the Holy Spirit is at work, messing with the world, so that what the prophet Joel spoke is alive and well—daughters will proclaim God's claim on creation, those oppressed will sing freedom songs. The Spirit will turn everything around, **fire, wind, Holy Spirit.**

## **Clean-up in the aisles of Bethesda!**

I.N.I.