

Devotion: May 28, 2020

Acts 2:1-21 (NIV)

² When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved

What do March 25th, April 24th, May 5th, May 18th and May 31st have in common?

They are all family birthday dates, missed because of the virus.

And this Sunday will be another birthday where we will be all gathered apart.

The birthday of the church. Pentecost.

At the first Pentecost over 3000 people were baptized, creating the first church. This is why Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Christian church.

On Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a special way. The story in Acts 2 describes a powerful wind and tongues of fire as the Holy Spirit was.

But just as the 3000 were wondering what this powerful Spirit was, 2020 years later we celebrate the Church's birthday wondering the same thing.

The Holy Spirit has been described in many ways.

Vince Gerhardy describes the Holy Spirit this way:

He is like a breath that blows away the dust and makes everything clean.

He is like refreshing cool water to a parched throat.

He is like a cleansing brush fire that burns away all the thick undergrowth so that something new can rise out of the ashes.

He is like a potter who starts with an odd-shaped lump and molds and shapes it into something beautiful.

He is like a renovator who uses what is already there and strengthens, refreshes and revitalizes what's there.

He is like a loving spouse whispering reassurances of love and support.

He is like a parent guiding and helping a confused child.

He is like a tour guide who points us in the right direction to see things that we would otherwise have missed.

He is that gentle tap on the shoulder that makes us realize, "Hey, that's me that needs a new beginning and new direction."

He is that fierce shaking that wakes us up; reminds us that there is more to life than earning money, relentlessly pushing ourselves until we are tired, stressed and depressed.

That is what the Holy Spirit does -- he revitalizes, renews, refreshes, empowers, creates, he reminds, he guides, he comforts the church, those in the church and those whom he touches outside the church.

My hope is that we can all know the Spirit's power on this church birthday Sunday.

Let us pray as Saint Augustine:

O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there thy cheerful beams. Amen.