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Sunday Missive – May 31, 2020 – The Day of Pentecost St. Peter's by the Sea – Morro Bay

Greetings to one and all on this singular feast day. We still await sufficient assurances from the medical and scientific community that banding together in our sanctuary on Shasta Avenue would be anything but foolhardy and irresponsible. Hence, another Sunday Missive.

Frequent conversations are being held amongst the leaders of the diocese about how to proceed with our beloved and ever-developing religious activities during the pandemic. Sets of guidelines are ongoingly revised, and each parish has its own blend of challenges.

In the coming weeks, you are invited to weigh in on these matters. One of your Vestry Members will likely call again soon, in hopes that you will express your desires and concerns, hopes and fears, suggestions and critique on the subject of our common life. If you do not get a phone call, please make one – to the Rector – or write him a note or an email. He will call or write back with a few points of inquiry for you to address!

Meanwhile, we are gathered in spirit, singing in our places of shelter and lifting our prayers and praises in the sure and certain hope that our life in and as the Body of Christ compels it.



The Biggest Fire

Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the living God,
Fall fresh on me.
Make me, melt me, mold me, use me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall fresh on me.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z96KV4nzHgM>

Pentecost is one of the oldest and most fundamental of human special occasions. A rich layering of traditions, whose connections are perhaps better perceived by heart than intellect. It is difficult to equate a celebration of the “god of fire” with our Christian narrative wherein the day is a reminder of the universality of Christ’s benevolent presence. We wear red for Pentecost to symbolize the power of fire, and we tell the story from The Acts of the Apostles about language being no barrier to love as the prime driver of Christian mission. Christmas tells us God is here. Easter tells us we are redeemed. Pentecost tells us what to do with all that information: treat every human being as a beloved sibling, worthy of our respect and care.

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles – Chapter Two

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 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.

Now there were devout people from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to

Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Dodger Stadium after a Friday night game

“And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” So ask the people when the Spirit of God comes upon them. The idea of Fire as a deity is behind us, though we can surely imagine the mysterious primacy fire held for early peoples. Goodness knows fire is still a central reality in every human life, both for good and ill. Nowadays we think we understand it, even when we can’t begin to control it. But the spiritual connection between us and fire has been mostly forgotten. This is an error of omission that has accompanied modernity – a downside.



Nacimiento Fire

When we think about how people treat each other these days, perhaps the need for a radical, elemental change like that of combustion begins to make some sense – at least as an analogy. Remember Isaiah’s lips, touched by a burning coal but not burned. Remember Moses’ bush all aflame yet intact. Remember the Book of Daniel, with Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego preserved in the fiery furnace because they refused to honor a false king. All of these were in the pursuit of truth, and it was only through the utterly transformative power of fire that truth was attained. When we are reduced to our very elements, we can be made anew. Let our prayer this day be for the power of elemental transformation to work on us: ourselves, our communities and the World.

O God, who on this day taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Hymn 510

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers;
kindle a flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours.

See how we trifle here below, fond of these earthly toys:
our souls, how heavily they go, to reach eternal joys.

In vain we tune our formal songs, in vain we strive to rise:
hosannas languish on our tongues, and our devotion dies.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers;
come, shed abroad a Savior's love, and that shall kindle ours.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hucD50nGyBA>



Flambé!

Hymn 513

Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight,
like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:
come, Holy Spirit, come.

To the members of Christ's Body, to the branches of the Vine,
to the Church in faith assembled, to her midst as gift and sign:
come, Holy Spirit, come.

With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer,
with the power to love and witness, with the peace beyond compare:
come, Holy Spirit, come.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufCHI7S-wsc>

And now, may the peace which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in the knowledge and love of God in Christ. May God's love be with you today and remain with you always. May you seek whatever transformative fires are necessary to bring you to that state of grace wherein the Spirit of love is your inspiration and the works of love your daily business.

Some Whitsunday Traditions

In Italy it was customary to scatter rose petals from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues; hence in Sicily and elsewhere in Italy Whitsunday is called *Pasqua rosatum*. The Italian name *Pasqua rossa* comes from the red colours of the vestments used on Whitsunday.

In France it was customary to blow trumpets during Divine service, to recall the sound of the mighty wind which accompanied the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

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In the north west of England, church and chapel parades called Whit Walks and Fairs take place at Whitsuntide. Typically, the parades contain brass bands and choirs, with those attending dressed in white. Other customs such as morris dancing and cheese rolling are also associated with Whitsunday, as the day is named in the Anglican Communion. The name is derived from "wit", hence "wisdom" (*Sancta Sophia* or *Hagia Sophia*), referred to in The Book of Proverbs and other Wisdom literature, with which the Holy Spirit is identified.

In Ukraine the springtime feast day customs of *Zeleni Sviata* became associated with the Pentecost. The home and hearth are cleaned, special foods prepared, and homes and churches were decorated with wildflowers and various types of green herbs and plants. The Pentecost feast includes cereal with honey (*kolyvo*), rice or millet grains with milk, sauerkraut soup (*kapusniak*), chicken broth with handmade noodles (*iushka z zaterkoiu*), cheese turnovers (*pyrizhky syrom*), roast pork, buckwheat cakes served with eggs and cheese (*blyntsi*), and baked kasha.

Online Church Services

St. Benedict's, Los Osos:

8am (except the first Sunday of the month) on
Zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7977776046>
10:30 every Sunday www.facebook.com/stbenslosos/live

Trinity Wall Street

<https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/blogs/watching-trinity-live-streamed-worship-services>

The National Cathedral, Washington, DC

<https://cathedral.org/online/>

All Saints Church, Pasadena
<https://allsaints-pas.org/live-stream/>

Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Texas
<https://incarnation.org/digital-worship/>

St. Barnabas, Arroyo Grande
<https://www.facebook.com/StBarnabasAG/> Sunday at 10:00
To see the worship bulletin, or recording of the service later:
<https://saintbarnabas-ag.org/>

