

## **The Sunday Missive – May 19, 2024 The Day of Pentecost – Whitsunday**

### **Hymn 516 Come down, O Love divine**

Come down, O Love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,  
And visit it with thine own ardor glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,  
And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,  
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,  
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace, till Love create a place  
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdxWJJ1jPyc>

### **The Collect of the Day**

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.**

### **Acts 2:1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples 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 Jews 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.' "

## **Psalm 104**

O Lord, how manifold are your works!\* ***In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.***

Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number\* ***Creatures both small and great.***

There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan\* ***Which you have made for the sport of it.***

All of them look to you\* ***To give them their food in due season.***

You give it to them; they gather it\* ***You open your hand, and they are filled with good things.***

You hide your face, and they are terrified\* ***You take away their breath, and they die and return to their dust.***

You send forth your Spirit, and they are created\* ***And so you renew the face of the earth.***

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever\* ***May the people rejoice in all the works of God.***

Who looks at the earth and it trembles\* ***Who touches the mountains and they smoke.***

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live\* ***I will praise my God while I have my being.***

May these words of mine please God\* ***Bless the Lord, O my soul. Hallelujah!***

### **Romans 8:22-27**

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

### **Sequence Hymn 513 Like the murmur of the dove's song**

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=o4q-nj66X-0>

### **John 15:26-16:15**

Jesus said to his disciples, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about

righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

### **Free Fuel, Self-Service -- Pentecost Year B**

Let us pray together: “My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know my own self. And the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you, and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire, and I know that if I try this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always. Though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen”

This prayer, written by the monk, Thomas Merton, guides us towards the places of justice and truth that God would have us call home. There is an inescapable and sobering aspect to this plan of God’s, a paradox that can lead us either to a life of frustration or a life of joy. Because this home, to which God welcomes us (and which is free of rent or mortgage!) has no address. It’s a spiritual Winnebago, that will never get stuck or break down, just as long as we keep the fuel tank full; it’s a self-propelled, nuclear-powered Airstream of the heart; a four speed, dual quad, positraction four-oh-nine of the soul, but with great mileage.

Today is the day of Pentecost, the day we remind ourselves and each other of what kind of fuel this rig runs on: Premium, Ethyl, or as we say in Missouri, Hi-Test. This fuel is also known as the Holy Spirit,

the Holy Ghost Power! And it comes in many languages. It comes in every language. To dig even deeper into this analogy, (help me Jesus) everyone who applies for credit at this Hi-Test gas station gets one; it's self-service, on the honor system, and we never get a bill ('til the end of the age).

Listen to these verses from the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Isaiah, wherein our motor home is described in beautiful and passionate detail:

“Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defence, and he will be my savior. Therefore, you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation. And on that day, you shall say, “Give thanks to the Lord; call upon God’s name. Make God’s deeds known among the peoples; see that they remember to exalt God’s holy Name.”

They didn't have Winnebago's back then, much less gas stations, but the image is very similar indeed. “You shall draw water with rejoicing...” Now in that time and climate, a safe and convenient source of good fresh water was just about the most important thing in the world. Just as it is here and now. Imagine a gas station, a water well, a source of supply that is always where we need it, and free. Talk about your springs of salvation. And our response will surely be both rejoicing and exalting. We can't wait to tell everyone this glorious good news: Unlimited, free fuel for our journey, come one, come all.

But why a motor home; why can't we do what Peter and the others wanted to do the last they found themselves on a mountaintop in the presence of God, build something and keep it to themselves forever? As we move through the New Testament story of the Church's birth, we see God continually clarifying the nature of the gift we are being offered. This life is not for guarding, keeping and securing. This life is for proclaiming, for demonstrating, for taking on the road. It is only truly ours as long as we are giving it away. Our life's journey will have all the fuel it can ever use, just as long as we accept that we are in truth just passing through.

King Oemig writes, “For all our modernity, our common language about the returning of the light remains the ‘sunrise’ and the ‘sunset,’

even though we know scientifically that it is the movement of the earth, not the sun that produces such contrasts in light and dark. This continuing tension in our own current language points to the longing in our hearts. We have a hunger for the universe to have meaning, and for that meaning to be found not in the destructive chaos that we seem to experience so much, but rather in an order created and sustained by a loving God.”

At a certain point, our capacities to understand logically and to capture reality clearly in words are eclipsed by our experiences of the world. We are somehow taken out of ourselves and have experiences that we can never express adequately.”

Pentecost points to one of these extraordinary rationality-exceeding moments...We understand God as the source and giver of life, the wellspring of wisdom, and the source of our vocation, our meaningful work in the world. Pentecost represents an outpouring, a filling up of human lives with a vibrant, hope-giving, wisdom-bringing presence that conveys with it utter assurance that while we have not earned such a gift, we are nonetheless recipients of it, and thus connected with the author of that gift, the creator – and re-creator – of the universe. We are made one with a reality much bigger than we are.”

We pass through many lands, encountering many people, each of whom speaks a unique language. Yet they understand us, and we them! And even though, since the Tower of Babel there are thousands of tongues, all of them are mutually intelligible beginning now at this Pentecostal moment, this springtime festival of love and inspiration. And those tongues become clearer to us every time we draw from this sweet, sweet well.

Jesus makes this abundantly clear to his disciples in today’s story. ‘I gotta go,’ he says. ‘I have to leave this campsite so that you can have it, and the next one, and the one after that. The fuel will keep on flowing back into your tank for as long as you shall live and far, far longer, but only as long as you keep traveling in my direction, keep following me towards the destination none of us can reach in a

lifetime.’ When Jesus declares “I have much more to tell you,” this is our sure and certain instruction to stay on the move, looking for clues, establishing new landmarks in a landscape that is always changing. What Jesus has to tell us, we can only hear by taking new kinds of risks based on each new dawning day’s observations, observations made with creative, compassionate, open hearts that draw us along the roads to happy destiny in the turbocharged, doublewide, fully loaded land yacht we call home, ever changing, ever true.

The absolute necessity of accepting our state of flux is never more apparent than at this time of year. Stunning displays of flowers and plant life, the greening of the trees and fields, that yield too suddenly to browning and thirst, the wild orchestras of birdsong, the comings and goings of the fishes, all remind us of the cycles of change. But in our human lives, we are confronted by an even more bracing reality. Our children, come into town and are as much fun as ever; the affection we share is humbling indeed, but then they are gone again, living their own lives, and we don’t always know when they’ll come around again. I find myself aware of empty rooms and uncertain reunion times. But they must go, and we must let them go in peace.

The only choice for us who are bereft is to keep moving, keep traveling on. And the only possible way we can do this is to drink deeply and often of the sweet, sweet water Isaiah talks about, to keep our tanks topped up with that pure, free fuel, to listen ever more closely as Jesus’ Word takes on new meaning for a new day, helping us reorganize our lives more closely to God’s will through acts of justice, mercy and humility.

Merton’s prayer speaks directly to us this day: “Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.” God has provided the Winnebago, the fuel, has given us roadmaps, scenery and companions. Today, the day of Pentecost we are reminded of our part in getting this rig on the road – we must allow ourselves to embrace whatever images make us internally combustible, we must listen to whatever language carburates the thoughts of our our hearts and sparks our willingness to work for peace.



## **Hymn 518 Christ is made the sure foundation**

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ the head and cornerstone,  
Chosen of the Lord, and precious, binding all the Church in one;  
Holy Zion's help forever, and her confidence alone.

All that dedicated city, dearly loved of God on high,  
In exultant jubilation pours perpetual melody;  
God the One in Three adoring in glad hymns eternally.

To this temple, where we call thee, come, O Lord of Hosts, today;  
With thy wonted lovingkindness hear thy servants as they pray,  
And thy fullest benediction shed within its walls always.

Here vouchsafe to all thy servants what they ask of thee to gain;  
What they gain from thee, forever with the blessed to retain,  
And hereafter in thy glory evermore with thee to reign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lif62E1Eru0>

## **Those Winter Sundays**

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Robert Hayden