



SACRED HEART CHURCH OF THE FIRST PEOPLES

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PENTECOST SUNDAY—C

Pentecost: Participation in a New Creation

Alleluia! Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia!

My brothers and sisters, Pentecost is all about participating in God's new creation through the Spirit.

In the beginning the "*Ruah*" or breath of God breathed over the chaos and the universe was created. Almost immediately, however, things went wrong. Adam and Eve sinned; Cain killed Able; the false pride of humans caused God to confuse the languages at the Tower of Babel, and God started over with the flood. Even that did not do it, as humanity broke covenant after covenant with God (Adam and Eve; Noah; Abraham; Moses) – all were broken; all had to be renewed.

Finally, God sent Jesus, his own Son, who as the Lamb of God would establish a new covenant through the sacrifice of his own life, through his Body and Blood. He would be totally faithful; do God's will, and initiate the reign of God here on earth, through the power of the Spirit.

The Pentecost event is the birth of that new creation. As a baby is held and spanked so that it would catch its breath and start living life in a new way, so too the giving of the Spirit on that day was humanity catching its breath to start living this new creation.

The Pentecost event involved not just wind, but also fire. The coming of the Spirit as a powerful wind, like the *ruah* or breath of God over the original chaos of the first creation, was a reminder that this too was an act of creation. The coming of the Spirit as tongues of fire, however, signalled newness, that this was more than just another creation. This was a new creation, a re-creation of the human heart.

The wind could move things externally and shake the house. The tongues of fire would purify and transform the hearts of humans. This new creation is not just a physical, natural one, visible to the eye, as was the first creation, but a new, internal creation of the human heart, mind and soul. It happens only to those who believe in Jesus; who open themselves up to receive his Spirit in their hearts and lives.

The miracle of Pentecost was a double miracle. The disciples were able to speak a

new language, and the people who heard them speak, understood in their own languages. It was a reversal of the confusion of the Tower of Babel, a sign of the healing power of this new creation.

The miracle of Pentecost affected people from all over the known world at that time, a sign that this new creation is universal, meant to include all people, the whole world, indeed the whole universe. But it will only happen when we move beyond the amazement and astonishment of the people at that time to faith.

Amazement and astonishment belong to the first creation, as a response to the ongoing discoveries of science and astrology. The new creation of the Spirit demands faith in Jesus Christ, and a life of love lived in his Spirit. It demands a totally trusting reception of the promised Spirit into our hearts, minds and lives. It involves the radical indwelling of the Triune God in our hearts, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It involves being taught and transformed by the fire of the Spirit that will burn away all impurities within us. As Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans, "if you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God."

Ultimately, we are called to live as totally new creatures in the Kingdom of God, new creations ourselves. We are called to witness to the reality of that Kingdom, that new creation, by our lives of holiness and love. Through the power of the Spirit, God is within us and we are in God, and we must be about building up the Reign of God here on earth.

Many of you know that my brother Louis had an operation for a brain tumour that proved to be an aggressive form of cancer. For twenty-nine months he responded to treatment in such a positive fashion that his doctor called it a miracle. His last MRI, however, revealed that the tumour had started to grow again. He then began taking chemo pills on a daily basis, and once again living in faith, hope and uncertainty.

But this time there was a change. My sister-in-law Judy shared with me that they arrived at a certain peace about the harsh reality of his illness. She was grateful for the unexpected months of life that he had already experienced. She was in awe at how the Spirit has been at work in the lives of so many people who received her periodic communications about their journey through this dark valley of sickness. A priest friend wrote that their struggle had given him the most spiritual Easter he had ever experienced. Another friend, who never prays, said that she was praying for Louis. They had a sense that all things were in God's hands. I believe that their faith in Jesus and his In-dwelling Spirit made them truly participants in that new creation that God has wrought through Jesus and the gift of his Spirit. When he passed away at the age of 65, that Spirit was truly present as we celebrated the faith-filled way he both lived, and died.

The Eucharist is a miracle in itself, a participation in that new creation. In the Spirit, Jesus is present in each one who gathers. In the Spirit, Jesus is present in the proclamation of his Word. Through the prayer to the Holy Spirit, humble gifts of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. And through the Spirit, we

who receive with humble faith and repentant hearts, are transformed into the Body of Christ ourselves, into a new creation, healed, forgiven and sent out to spread the Good News of this new creation.

So remember, Pentecost is all about participating in God's new creation through the Spirit. Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.

Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, OMI

EMPATHY FOR THE WORLD

Jesus loved the world.

Here's how the Gospels describe Jesus' reaction towards the world that rejected him: As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it saying: "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." (see Luke 19:41-44)

Jesus sees what happens when people try to live without God, the mess, the pain, the heartbreak, and, far from rejoicing that the world isn't working, his heart aches with empathy: If only you could see what you're doing!

We are asked by our Christian faith to have a genuine love for the world. The world isn't our enemy. That can be hard to see and accept when in fact the world is often belligerent and arrogant in its attitude towards us, when it's angry with us, when it wrongly judges us, and when it scapegoats us.

Author Kathleen Norris suggests that we look at the world, when it opposes us, in the same way as we look at an angry 17-year-old girl dealing with her parents. At that moment of anger, her parents become a symbolic lightning rod (a safe place) for her to vent her anger and to scapegoat. But absorbing this is a function of adult loving. Good parents don't respond to the anger of an adolescent child by declaring her their enemy. They respond like Jesus did, by weeping over her.

Moreover, a genuine empathy for the world isn't just predicated on mature sympathy. Mature sympathy is itself predicated on better seeing the world for what it is. The 17-year-old adolescent standing belligerent and angry before her parents isn't a bad person, she's just not yet fully grown up.

That's true too for our world: It's not a bad place; it's just far from being a finished and mature one

Ron Rolheiser, San Antonio, Texas

PENTECOST HAPPENED AT A MEETING

If you're someone who's at all concerned about community, family, church, justice, education, culture, or civic issues, you will, no doubt, find yourself at a lot of meetings.

There are an endless variety of issues that call for our participation in group discussion and community discernment: church issues, education issues, justice issues, moral issues, political issues, social issues, economic issues, and cultural issues. It's a bottomless well and all those meetings can seem like a huge waste of time and energy, a distraction to real work.

Moreover, at a point, we can't help wondering too: "Are all these meetings changing anything? Would life be any different (other than more leisured and pleasant) if we stopped having all these meetings?" It's easy to grow tired, discouraged, and cynical about all the meetings we're asked to attend.

But we should keep something in mind: Pentecost happened at a meeting! One of the central events that shaped Christian history and history in general, happened not to an individual off praying alone or to a monk on a mountain-top or to a solitary Buddha meditating under a tree. Pentecost happened at meeting, and it happened to a community, to a church congregation assembled for prayer, to a family of faith gathered to wait for God's guidance.

Moreover, it happened in a common room, a meeting room, in one of those humble, church basement type of rooms. It can be helpful to remember that. Our search for God should take us not just into private places of quiet and contemplation but, equally, into meeting rooms.

That can be helpful to keep in mind when we tire of meetings, despair of their effectiveness, or resent that they pull us away from important private endeavours. The fact that Pentecost happened at a meeting can also be helpful in keeping us focused on why we are going to all these meetings in the first place.

We need to go to continue to go to meetings, spending time together waiting for God, waiting for a new outflow of heavenly fire that will give us the courage, language, and power we need to make happen in the world what our faith and love envision.

See you at the meeting!

Ron Rolheiser, San Antonio, Texas



READINGS FOR ASCENSION SUNDAY

FIRST READING

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2.1-11)

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 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 their own language. 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 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 converts, Cretans and Arabs — in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Psalm 104)

Response: Lord, send forth your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. O Lord, how manifold are your works! The earth is full of your creatures. R.

When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth. R.

May the glory of the Lord endure for-ever; may the Lord rejoice in his works. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. R.

SECOND READING

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12.3b-7, 12-13)

Brothers and sisters: No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Thanks be to God

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Alleluia.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Alleluia.

GOSPEL READING

A reading from the Gospel according to John (John 20.19-23)

It was evening on the day Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples

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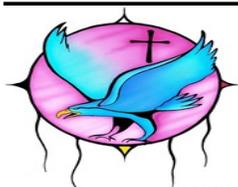
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