

In the mid 80's I was working in a church with a staff of about 20 people. It was apparent that some of the people on the staff weren't getting along. This was causing division and that led to a lot of bad feelings and, really, working in a Church/School environment should lead to understanding and loving one another.

But this wasn't happening. One of the parishioners was a psycho therapist who had a particular interest in personality types and offered to give the staff the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. How many of you have heard of the Myers Briggs? The Myers Briggs is an instrument used to help us understand ourselves and others better.

WE are all unique individuals and understand things in different ways. We have different ways of communicating ideas and feelings. Once we really understand that everyone hears and understands our words differently we can speak in their language.

A group of people can all witness a great event or be at the same inspiring presentation and every one of them will walk away with a different understanding.

Today in the lesson from Acts, the followers of Jesus are given the ability to speak the languages of all the different people in the crowd. God made sure that the people understood the good news in the way that they could relate to it; in just the way they needed to hear it; in their language.

The same thing is happening today to us.

We hear the Word of God in our own language, with our images, with our own metaphors, with our own ears; in the way that we can understand it.

In Scripture we hear two accounts of the coming of the Holy Spirit;

In the Gospel of John, Jesus breathed the Spirit unto the apostles in gentleness and peace.

And then, today, in the account from Acts, Luke tells us that the Spirit came in the rushing wind and tongues of fire appearing over the apostle's heads.

Today after hearing about the Holy Spirit, some of us will be encouraged to spend more time in praise and wonder to thank God for blessings; others will hear that the power that they need for tomorrow's trials and tribulations will come; still others will take heart - knowing that God is present to them at all times, in all things.

Whatever it is - it will be filled with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit and uniquely yours.

Pentecost is the reversal of what happened at the Tower of Babel when, because of sinfulness, we became unable to understand one another.

How have you experienced the Holy Spirit?
All of us have the Spirit of God within us. At our Baptism, the Priest or the Bishop dipped his or her thumb in holy chrism and said, "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever.

The one who baptized you prayed to God to sustain you in the Holy Spirit to have an inquiring and discerning heart, courage to will and to persevere, to know and to love God and the gift of joy and wonder in all God's works.

Pentecost is the birth of the Church; the People of God and our becoming Christ in the world.

It is God taking on flesh in us - not only those to whom we give water to drink or clothes to wear; but taking on flesh in us. I often quote the saying of St. Athanasius that 'God, the Divine, became man so that man could become Divine.

The birth of the Spirit within us gives us the eyes to see that God is in the details; that God is in the flesh - as well as in the Spirit; and ears to hear God speaking in our hearts and on the lips of others - in the rush of the wind and as unique persons who are so loved, valued and treasured so much by God that God comes to us as we are and makes us even more truly who we are when we acknowledge that we are His.

The story of the birth of the church, fifty some odd days after the death and resurrection of Jesus that Christians call Pentecost - tells us that this is what God has done - and is yet doing.

It is God amongst us in power making us not simply a group of believers but Christ in the world; empowered to spread the Good News of God's unending love to all.

Celebrating this day helps us to remember that we are the Church, the body of Christ; we are given special gifts. As Paul wrote in his Letter to the Corinthians, we are all given the power of the Holy Spirit for the common good. We are all given special, unique gifts to use in building up the Kingdom. 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.

*Some thoughts taken from a sermon by Rev. Richard J. Fairchild