

Come, Holy Spirit, Come

Day of Pentecost

Whitsunday, year C

Genesis 11:1-9

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17, 25-27

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June 8, 2025

Happy Pentecost! The feast day with all the excitement of Christmas and Easter without the stress. No pressure to buy the perfect gift. You don't have to worry about a Pentecost card mailing list. The decoration is simple- just make it red. But, oh the excitement that is a feast for the senses- rushing wind, dancing flames of fire, and a symphony of voices coming together to proclaim the Good News of the unconditional love of God. The Holy Spirit comes amongst us chanting, "Let's get fired up!"

The Holy Spirit is like a super energetic cheerleader- cheering us on, giving us energy when ours is flagging, and pushing us out into the world to do the work that Christ has given us to do. Like a fire flame, they are never still. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is in full flame, burning bright blue with extreme heat, urgently moving our minds and bodies forward. Other times they are more like an ember, pulsing red, heat contained until they need to light a spark to get the fire going in our souls.

The Holy Spirit is the most versatile member of the Holy Trinity. Trying to predict the Holy Spirit is like trying to predict the weather in Oklahoma. It can't be done with complete accuracy; you must open the door of your soul to greet the Holy Spirit yourself.

After I graduated from Oklahoma's veterinary school, I lived in St. Louis, Missouri for many years. It was there that I came to realize how much I missed the Oklahoma wind. In St. Louis, the air was often still or just a faint breeze, making it easy to forget about, except when you wished it would blow to dispel the heat and odors of too many people living too close together.

In Oklahoma though, the wind is alive. It has personality and moods. One moment it may gently caress your face giving you a refreshing boost on a scorching day, and the next it is trying to force your car into the other lane with a fierce gust. Much like the Holy Spirit, the Oklahoma wind is ever present, uncontrollable, and inescapable. You may shut your windows, slam your

doors closed, and sit huddled in your home, but the wind will blow through the cracks, stir the dust, and force you to face that which might wish to ignore.

The Holy Spirit does the same when we shut the doors of our hearts, minds, and souls. They work their way through the cracks in our armor. There is a great animated movie called *Klaus* (Pablos, 2019). In this movie, Klaus is a woodsman and toy maker who has become reclusive, shutting himself off from the world after the death of his wife. Hounded to make toys by a desperate mailman named Jesper, we see Klaus walking in the woods when suddenly the wind begins to swirl around his feet and swing the birdhouses above his head. Klaus pauses, cocks his head listening to the wind, and then quietly begins making toys that bring joy to the island children who have only known a constant family feud. This is the Holy Spirit at work. Calling to us, tugging at us to do the work of unconditional love, to help bring reconciliation, to share grace and mercy even when all we want to do is to shut ourselves off from the world.

We can't control the wind any more than we can the Holy Spirit, but that doesn't stop us from trying. The daily demands and voices in our lives become like wind breaks in our souls, relegating the Holy Spirit to just another voice vying for our attention. Sometimes the wind break is as simple as vegging on the couch as we scroll through countless streaming services of nothing to watch. But it is also the sheer number of demands on our time that cause us to throw up barriers rather than trusting the Spirit to guide us through and keep us from getting lost amongst it all. We want to be in control. But the Spirit soars through us touching every cell of our being, breaking through the cracks, filling the voids, stirring the dust of our lives, and forcing us to acknowledge those things we try to ignore. It breaks through our illusion of control to remind us of who God calls us to be and what Christ calls us to do.

On this Pentecost day, we remember the power of the Holy Spirit that pushed the disciples into the world, empowering them to spread the Gospel message of love. We also celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. But we can't just treat Pentecost as a day we celebrate and then forget about. We should live Pentecost every day by stepping out into the world ready to proclaim with passion the Good News of Christ.

We may feel inadequate or even scared to share the Good News of Christ, particularly with someone whose life is different than ours. We think we don't know how to do it. In reality, we all know how if we just open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, trusting them to do their thing. In doing so, we are empowered to spread the Gospel just like those early disciples, finding the way to speak in words that the other needs to hear. Love is, after all, a universal language.

The story of the Tower of Babel is often seen as the creation of different languages in the world. But it is also the divine creation of diversity. This means that there are many ways to show the love of God, to talk about God, and to show unconditional love for each other. Even if we speak the same language, we all hear in our way. Therefore, we must meet people where they are. Speak to them in a language that they understand. This can mean speaking to them in the language of their native culture or speaking the language of their experiences. The poor, the

abused, the Pride community, scientists and musicians, different generations- these are just a few examples of how we all speak a different language even when the base language is English.

As Father Joseph alluded to in his sermon last week, evangelism is speaking the language of love. Even thinking about evangelism causes most Episcopalians to stiffen up and shut down. Most likely because of our own evangelical trauma. But if we don't spread the Good News that God loves everyone, who will? In America today, you might even think of this as counter-evangelism, helping people to work through their evangelistic trauma by using the spiritual practice of naming and celebrating Jesus' loving presence in the stories of all people, and then inviting them to more.

As followers of Christ, we are called to leave our places of comfort and solace going out into the world proclaiming with passion the Good News of Christ's love for all people. To show the world that the power of love is stronger than hate. More powerful than bigotry and greed. Everyone should know that the only thing that will change this world is unconditional love. This is what brings peace and makes a world where all God's children are accepted for how they were made and who they are. In answer to Christ's call to us we need to say, "I will be an instrument of your peace. I will be an instrument of your love. I will go out of this place and show the world your love, because you first loved me. I will."

Come Holy Spirit, come. Open our eyes to the sacred beauty and worth of diversity. Empower us to proclaim the Gospel message of unconditional love with boldness and courage. Light the fire within us all so that we live Pentecost every day, sharing the wondrous love of Christ to the ends of the earth.

Amen.

Bibliography

Pablos, S. (Director). (2019). *Klaus* [Motion Picture].