

The Day of Pentecost
June 9, 2019
Church of the Holy Cross
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We Are All Together

I cannot even imagine! Here is Jesus, Died, risen, hanging out with the disciples, and out of the blue, Phillip says to Jesus, *"Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."* Think about that for a moment... show us the Father, and we will be satisfied? I would love to know what Jesus was thinking at that moment. Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied—what Phillip, dying and rising from the dead was not enough for you? Not to mention turning water into wine, giving the blind their sight, healing, and oh, oh, what about feeding all those people with a couple of loaves and fish? With all of that, you are still not satisfied? If We really knew what Jesus said in response, I think it might start with, "Seriously Philip? "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me." I think we had to fast forward to the lyrics of John Lennon I have quoted before: *"I am he, and you are he, and you are me and we are all together."* Coo Coo Cachoo! Now is it clear?

I think these scriptures are the ones where we have to suspend our understanding of the world and take a leap of faith. There was a promise that the Holy Spirit would be sent, there was a rushing sound—like a tornado! It had to be frightening, like the greatest storm that has ever come to the earth. Then, all of a sudden when they are expecting a storm of, well, biblical proportions, fire appears over each of their heads!

Take a moment, we are going to need to take a leap of faith. If we saw a scene like this in a sci-fi movie backed by plausible science, we would believe this could really happen—think *Jurassic Park*. I tell you that I can prove that it did happen, right here, and right now. Look around you. Where are you? Why are you really here? If this did not happen, if the Holy Spirit had not come and ignited the hearts and minds of the people, this church, even all of Christianity would not exist. Without the divine gifts the Holy spirit gave to the disciples, and still give to us today in the form of our imagination, inspiration, and intuition—we would not be here. We are the proof.

Today we celebrate the receiving of the gift of light of the Holy Spirit. We pray to continue to receive the gifts of good judgment in all we do, and that we continue to be comforted by the Holy Spirit present with us, knowing that we are not alone, but are part of the whole that is God and creation through our relationship with Jesus.

I was reading Nadia Bolz Weber's take on Pentecost and I wanted to share part of it with you from that sermon. *"A few years ago a local Lutheran church gifted House for All Sinners and Saints a full set of used paraments [paraments are the hangings here in the chancel area]. Nadia continued: My church is like every other church's little sister so we get a lot of hand me downs. As a group of us went through these beautiful altar cloths we came finally to the red set and found one with an image of a descending dove with completely crazy eyes and claws that looked like talons. Yep. It was as though the Holy Spirit was a raptor. "Man, someone said. We can't use this one it makes The Holy Spirit look dangerous."* Nadia replied: *That was some completely sound advice. I hear people describe Pentecost as the birthday of the church...which has always kind of smacked of oversentimentality to me. Because it's not exactly a quaint story. It's a dangerous one. The story opens with that small group of believers isolating themselves as the text says, all together in one place. They were perhaps afraid of outsiders so they all stayed together. Had they actually known better they would have been afraid of not dispersing because what was about to happen would have freaked out even the bravest amongst us. They were in danger but not from outsiders – the danger they were in, as they sat all together in one place, was from a God who is about to crash the party and bring in everyone they were trying to avoid.*

Things got crazy then with the wind and voices and languages and fire and all that. It can feel like all the crazy stuff that happened that Pentecost day in first century Palestine bares little resemblance to what the church has become in 21st century America. There were no organs or committees or vacation bible school. At the so-called birth of the church there were no ushers handing (the Parthians) us a bulletin. (The Medes) They didn't have a bake sale after the service. It can be hard to see any resemblance at all from how we started to what we have become.Well, unless we look at the people. In which case there is honestly no difference what so ever. I have to agree with Nadia on this point in particular, because we are still linear people, who need to see to believe, and even then, we need to be reminded to trust our eyes, and to look for where God is in every situation.

Nadia illustrates with some humor however, how she sees that people are the same today as they were 2,000 years ago – I found this rather amusing, she continues: *“See, we still have fear and isolation in the church. It's called sectarianism. So, nothing's changed there. And those people who did the whole speaking in tongues thing ...well, obviously they are the Pentecostals. And that long list of how many different nationalities showed up must have been added by the first UCC'er (That's the United Church of Christ) bragging about their multiculturalism. Nothing's changed there. Then there were those who witnessed this powerful act of God...this Pente-chaos and, in an attempt at intellectualizing it, all they said was “well what does this mean?” So, they were like, the first Lutherans.*

And the ones who said “Those people are drunk” were perhaps some Evangelicals focused on the personal morality of others. So that's not changed a whole lot. Then finally there's the nice but completely naive guy who says “O my gosh, there's no way they can be drunk...it's only 9 o'clock in the morning” So there we have what we like to call the Methodists. I agree with Nadia when she says, Nothing's changed much. People are people. There are the emotional ones, the judgmental one, the naïve ones, and of course the ones like myself who insist on categorizing and naming everyone as though people can be reduced to a label. Honestly. So there we all are even from the beginning. Flawed, smug, confused, embarrassed and embarrassing...in other words the very people to whom God sends the spirit.”

Nadia's story leaves us asking, “Who then are the Episcopalians?” The ones who believe that we should study scripture, follow traditions, use reason, and learn from our experiences? Again, I say, look around you, you are here. The scripture stories did happen, the Holy Spirit is here with us igniting our hearts and minds with imagination, inspiration, and intuition. I am comforted by the fact that I am part of this community, brothers and sisters with all of you, united as the Holy Cross branch of the body of Christ. Take heed from all of the words you heard today, and know that with great gifts come great responsibility. The list of what we are to do is not long, but it challenges us everyday, and we need the Holy Spirit with us if we are to meet the challenge Jesus gave us: To love one another, as Jesus loved us, without conditions and with no exceptions, we are to love everyone, the flawed, smug, confused, embarrassed and embarrassing people of the earth – all of humankind. When we do that, we are the proof that the Holy Spirit is with us. In a few minutes we will Baptize Maeve Rose. The Holy Spirit is with us, and will bestow upon her gifts of the Spirit, and we will welcome her fully into the community of Christ. Like us, she will love and be loved for just who she is, a precious child of God. Amen

Acts 2:1-21
Romans 8:14-17
John 14:8-17, (25-27)
Psalm 104:25-35, 37

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2012/05/the-pentecost-sermon-i-preached-at-the-festival-of-homiletics/>