**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer – Pentecost, May 23, 2021**

*“The fires of Pentecost are a sign of the God who resists our every attempt to domesticate the divine and to control how the holy will work.” Jan Richardson*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Betty)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Anne and Bill for preparing today’s communal prayer and to Reggie Ott and Linda and Ian Donaldson who will be leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Sr. Vera Ruotolo, Linda Donaldson, Sister Marie McCarthy, Charlotte Cook, Mary Ott, Tim Brown, Marilyn Voigt, Kathleen Cross, and Frances Schueler.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Anne Regan)**

As we quiet ourselves this morning, recall that we literally breathe the Holy Spirit. “The inmost, subtle breath that arises from the Spirit is the transforming power of God. Uniting ourselves with the breath is uniting ourselves to the evolving and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit.”

Notice your breath as it goes in… and out. We begin together with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to recognize with delight the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our prayerful song together, “Open My Eyes.”

**OPENING SONG: Open My Eyes by Jesse Manibusan (Reggie Ott)**

Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see your face.
Open my eyes, Lord,
Help me to see.

Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear your voice.
Open my ears, Lord,
Help me to hear.

Open my heart, Lord
Help me to love like you.
Open my heart, Lord,
Help me to love.

And the first shall be last
And our eyes are opened
And we'll hear like never before
And we'll speak in new ways
And we'll see God's face in places we've never known.

I live within you,
Deep in your heart, O Lord.
I live within you,
Rest now in me.

**GREETING (Bill Fanelli)**

Let us rejoice, for the Sprit is upon us! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**All:** Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP/GATHERING PRAYER (Bill Fanelli and Anne Regan)**

As we complete the Pascal cycle in Pentecost, let us cast a glance over our shoulders to review the path we have traveled.

On Good Friday we grapple with the loss of life, the real death of Jesus’ body.

**All:** We are nearly broken by the violent end used to dissuade and distract us from Jesus’ disrupting message.

On Easter Sunday we are stunned by the reception of new life, and it is hard to recognize.

**All:** We are dazed by this astonishingly good news! But can it really be true?

For Forty Days we struggle to adjust to the new, and grieve for the old.

**All:** We try to cling to the Jesus we met in the flesh, but somehow we are experiencing a new presence.

At the Ascension we let go of our old experience of Jesus. We are blessed, and told to expect the Comforter.

**All:** Somehow we refuse our searing desire to cling, and try to understand what the coming comfort could be.

We have arrived at Pentecost! We open our eyes to recognize the Spirit for the new life that we are already living!

**All:** The promised Comforter proves to be uncomfortable. We are driven by the fire of the Spirit into untamed lands!

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Bill Fanelli)**

For many years on Pentecost I heard there were “Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem”. The Jews were gathered for Shavuot - Pentecost in Greek – fifty days after Passover. On Passover, the people of Israel were freed from their enslavement to Pharaoh; on Shavuot, they were given the Torah and became a nation in covenant to God. The Jewish Pentecost was a time for those who had been lifted out of poverty and slavery to remember that abundance and freedom obligate us to those who continue to live in poverty and chains. In the Christian Pentecost we celebrate the arrival of the Holy Spirit. We see the Comforter coming as wind, as flame.

This morning we will hear two different versions of the Spirit coming to the disciples. Clearly the early Christian communities appreciated, and found truth in diverse accounts. The first reading is from the Gospel of John in which the Spirit arrives directly from Jesus’ breath on Easter night. In John’s version, the disciples were afraid. Jesus brought peace, AND sent them into the world to disrupt it. The second reading from Acts is the familiar story of the tongues of fire fifty days after Easter. Of course these stories are for us too.

What is the peace that Jesus comforts us with and the mission the Spirit prepares us for? The promised ‘comfort’ is strength to sustain us in Jesus’ radical work, dismantling unjust systems and bringing about LOVE. This work mobilized a new social and religious movement and provoked opposition from the powers, resulting in persecution and the scattering of the disciples. We are reminded that comfort is not always comfortable. Comfort makes itself known in community, where we find the most searing challenges – and deepest blessings – we will ever know.

*(Slight pause)*

Now Sister Vera Ruotolo will read from the 20th Chapter of John, followed by questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1** [Jn 20:19-23](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/20?19) **(Sr. Vera Ruotolo)**

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, “Peace be with you.”
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
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.”
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
“Receive the Holy Spirit.”

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Charlotte Cook)**

What does it mean to you to ‘receive the Spirit’?

At this time in your life, what does it mean to be ‘sent’? Do you see a new sending?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty and Charlotte)**

**Betty:** Share slide w/questions, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.

**Charlotte:** Now Linda Donaldson will read from the second chapter of Acts.

**READING** Acts 2:1-11 **(Linda Donaldsom)**

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.
At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd,
but they were confused
because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
They were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
“Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?
Then how does each of us hear them in our native language?
We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,
inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene,
as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs,
yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues
of the mighty acts of God.”

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Charlotte Cook)**

Where do you go to hear and see what you cannot hear and see on your own?

When have you heard an unfamiliar message from an unexpected source that somehow struck you as true, and worth evaluating?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty and Charlotte)**

**Betty:** Share slide w/questions, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.

**Charlotte:** Now Sister Marie McCarthy will read a reflection derived from Father Ronald Rolheiser and Sister Teresa Maya:

**READING 3 (Sr. Marie McCarthy)**

Catholic Social Teaching is clear – we are called to bring about justice. Jesus interrupted the world’s ideas about power, preaching radical love and challenging unjust social structures at every turn. But God is God and we are us.

Rolheiser notes that in the scriptures of all the great religions, we see that God is defined precisely as “other,” as what is beyond imagination, outside the realm of the familiar. “God is prodigal, abundant, generous, and wasteful beyond our small fears and imaginations.” While our imaginations are small, Rolheiser notes that our hearts are complex. Even as they yearn for a wide embrace, they also huddle in fear, and are forever locking doors against what looks strange and threatening.

We see a powerful image of this when we look at the story of how the first disciples of Jesus reacted to his death. There is a lesson to be learned as well as a great irony. Frightened, the disciples retreat to a room, lock the door against the outside, and huddle together in fear. However, and this is the irony, while they were so huddled in fear of what was outside, they were not really in community with one another. Nothing life-giving flows from a group of frightened persons ganging up against the world and consoling one another within their fragility. Even as Jesus continues to appear to them, they remain locked in their fear. With the Ascension they are given the command to “go forth.” It is only when Pentecost does happen and they receive God’s spirit that they act. They unbolt the doors, throw them open, and burst out of those narrow confines, ablaze with a new fire and courage.

Their narrowness and fear give way to an inclusivity that enables them to speak all the languages of the world. Their real discipleship and their generativity begin at precisely that point.

In words derived from of Sister Teresa Maya, CCVI:

“Doors” have intrigued me. On a trip to Rome, I decided to go through the Door of Mercy. No sooner had I crossed into St. Peter´s, when, instead of feeling the freedom of mercy, I felt constrained and confined, crushed by tourists! Then I turned around and realized that grace came only after “la salida” – after going forth. After that, I started taking pictures of doors from the inside of the basilica looking out. I realized we are called to “go forth,” to become “comunión en salida”-- facing the people of God, the needs God sees, the suffering of our entire planet. We need to leave the comfort of our on-going conversations. The place for us is reclaiming our going forth, “la salida”- what lies beyond – this is our rightful place.

*(Slight pause)*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Charlotte Cook)**

Where are you turning your ears, your eyes, your heart, your mind to perceive the presence of the Spirit, and the path to which it is drawing you?

When have you felt compelled to fling open your doors, and burst forth with fire and courage?

Where do you long for the Spirit in your life?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty and Charlotte)**

**Betty:** Share slide w/questions, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.

**Charlotte:** Tim Brown will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Tim Brown)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long-ish pause]

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Pause.]

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

Tim Brown: Now Mary Ott will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Mary Ott)**

Today’s scriptures remind us that we are called to continue the ministry of Jesus as part of the body of Christ. Knowing we are part of a divine mystery that defies our comprehension, we confidently we offer our prayers.

So let’s pause to notice the prayers that rise in us now. *(Pause)*

Grant that our transgender loved one have their daily needs met—that they can find gainful employment without discrimination, access medical care without fear, and find a loving community to belong to and call their own. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

We pray for healthcare workers in India who risk their lives each day to heal and care for the sick with supplies that are running out, that they receive the medicines and equipment they need to give vital treatment. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

Across the Middle East, we pray for help and support to reach all who are in need, and ask to turn the hearts of leaders throughout the region towards peace. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

Sustain the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they continue to embody your presence in the world. For this we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers)

Loving God, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Marilyn Voigt)**

As Pentecost closes this Easter season, we recognize the amazing gift of the Spirit within us. What does it mean to receive and be God’s presence? In the going forth of Pentecost, what call do you see for yourself this week? [Pause.]

Let us pray. Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Kathleen Cross)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that we are your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us recognize an ever deepening awareness of love that connects us to God’s living presence in our world. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Frances Schueler)**

Now let us join our hearts and raise our hands to pray in harmony the words that Jesus gave us:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Anne Regan)**

On the day

When you are wearing

Your certainty like a cloak

And your sureness

Goes before you

Like a shield

Or like a sword,

May the sound of God’s name

Spill from your lips

As you have never heard it before.

May your knowing

Be undone.

May mystery

confound your

understanding.

May the Divine

Rain down

In strange syllables

Yet with an ancient familiarity

A knowing borne

In the blood,

The ear

The tongue

Hearing the clarity that comes

Not in stone

Or in steel

But in fire,

In flame.

May there come

One searing word:

Enough to bare you to the bone,

Enough to set

Your heart ablaze,

Enough to make you

Whole again.

Paintedprayerbook.com/2011/06/05/Pentecost-one-searing-word

**CLOSING SONG : “Send Down the Fire” by Marty Haugen (Linda and Ian Donaldson)**

**Refrain:**

Send down the fire of your justice,
Send down the rains of your love;
Come, send down the Spirit, breathe life in your people,
And we shall be people of God.

Call us to learn of your mercy,
Teach us the way of your peace;
Give us hearts that feel,
Give us hands that heal,
Make us walk in the way of your peace.

**(Refrain)**

Call us to answer oppression,
Teach us the fire of your truth;
Give us righteous souls,
‘Til your justice rolls,
Make us burn with the fire of your truth.

**(Refrain)**

**RESOURCES**

Left Behind and Loving It: Pentecost is Justice Revived <https://leftbehindandlovingit.blogspot.com/2012/05/pentecost-is-justice-revived.html>

Jan Richardson paintedprayerbook 2014

Pentecost as a Riot of the Unheard <https://radicaldiscipleship.net/2020/06/01/pentecost-as-a-riot-of-the-unheard/>

Comunión “En Salida”:1

An Apostolic Call for our time in Religious Life

LCWR Presidential Address August 2018, S. Teresa Maya, CCVI

<https://lcwr.org/sites/default/files/calendar/attachments/presidential_address_-_teresa_maya_ccvi.pdf>

Ronald Rolheiser (2014). Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity. New York: Image.

The Christian Tradition breathmeditation.org

Catholic Social Teaching Scripture Guide, 2010, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/campus-ministry/tools-for-action/upload/cst-scripture-guide-donna-update-matt2.pdf>

Paintedprayerbook.com/2011/06/05/Pentecost-one-searing-word