

SOLIDARITY WITH SISTERS' SUNDAY GATHERING – PENTECOST, MAY 31, 2020

WELCOME (Betty)

- Introductions – people who haven't been here before?
- Thanks for Stu Sklamm and Reggie Ott, who will lead us in music today.
- Thanks for our readers today – Judy Sholes, Marilyn Voigt, Mary Ott, and Gail DeGeorge).
- If you would like to be a reader, please get in touch.
- If you would like to prepare a future Sunday liturgy, we would be happy to coordinate with you. Give us a call or email.

SETTLING IN (Betty)

As we prepare to begin, let's move from arriving here to being here. Settle into a comfortable position. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. Become aware of divine presence in you and around you.

Now take 3 deep breaths. One to be here... one to be together... and one to create space for the Holy Spirit alive among us!

As we celebrate the birthday of the church, let us light our candles with a prayer that the Holy Spirit may kindle in us the fire of God's love.

Now Stu Sklamm will lead us in Veni Sancte Spiritus.

ENTRANCE MUSIC – Veni Sancte Spiritus (Stu Sklamm)

(Share onscreen the English translation from the Taize community of this traditional Pentecost Sequence - Betty)

Come, Holy Spirit, from heaven shine forth with your glorious light.
Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

Come, Father of the poor, come, generous Spirit, come, light of our hearts.
Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

Come from the four winds, O Spirit, come breath of God!
Disperse the shadows over us, renew and strengthen your people.
Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

Most kindly warming light! Enter the inmost depths of our hearts,
for we are faithful to you. Without your presence we have nothing.
Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

You are our only comforter, Peace of the soul.
In the heat you shade us; in our labor you refresh us; in trouble you are our strength.
Veni, Sancte Spiritus!

On all who put their trust in you and receive you in faith, shower all your gifts.
Grant that they may grow in you and persevere to the end.
Give them lasting joy!

GREETING (Betty)

The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit of God dwelling
within us, Alleluia!

All: And all God's people reply: Alleluia!

CALL TO WORSHIP (Betty)

Jesus told us that wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he is among us. We
come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as
people of God and the body of Christ. Mindful that God is in love with us and that the
Spirit of God is within us, we pray that our time together will be radiant with the light of
Christ. Amen.

GATHERING PRAYER (Betty)

O God who creates and who gives breath,
be with us now as we come to you

with the great longings of our world
and of our selves.
We come together
trusting that the Spirit pour into us today
on this great feast of Pentecost,
and asking the Spirit to be at work in us
for the transformation of ourselves and our world.
Help us to let go and to let come.
Help us to live the questions
and to move with you, in you, and toward you,
ever open to what is waiting to be born in us.

INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie)

If you look at today's readings, you'll notice that there's a powerful epistle from First Corinthians, about the gifts of the spirit and the one body of Christ. We're going to save it for another Sunday so we can delve into it more completely. So now let's turn to the readings for today.

As you know, the Gospels come to us from the perspective of different communities. Each community emphasized the truth of Jesus differently. Today we listen to two communities, in John's Gospel and in Luke's Acts of the Apostles.

Both John and Luke express the awe and joy they felt as Jesus gave his followers the fullness of his Spirit to enliven them, and us, forever. As we hear their words, let's catch that awe and joy! Let your body feel this amazing gift!

We've heard John's Gospel many times. We remember that the disciples hid inside, afraid for their lives. That Jesus appeared to them and said "Peace be with you." That all this happened on "the first day of the week" – Easter night. But did you also remember that John is telling us that the disciples first received the Holy Spirit that Easter night when Jesus breathed on them?! But "Jesus did not ask the disciples to leave that room.

Rather he asked the disciples to wait there till they were strengthened with power from on high, the Holy Spirit. This Spirit would transform them from fearful persons into faith-filled disciples and launch them on the bold and unstoppable mission of proclaiming the

gospel.”* Later In Acts, Luke’s Pentecost story tells us that it took the disciples 50 more days to understand what this meant –that they were forming an inclusive community.

For most of us Pentecost has focused on the tongues of fire entering the disciples and their speaking to crowds in other languages. The combination of the readings from John and from Acts invites us to look at this fact as well: to go forth, to be useful to the world, we must first receive Christ’s peace, and let our hearts rest in God. Only then can the Holy Spirit speak through us.

We celebrate all of this when we call Pentecost the birthday of the church. The Spirit transformed individual disciples into an inclusive community that then became a missionary church. That is happening for us, too, as we have been gathering throughout Lent and Easter.

We acknowledge the disciples’ uncertainties as they came to know and trust the Spirit of Jesus among them – and we recognize that in ourselves as well. We celebrate their willingness to take on new roles – and we recognize that in ourselves. We celebrate their joy in appreciating each other as companions in God’s continuing mission on earth – and we recognize that in ourselves. We celebrate their capacity to communicate the presence of God in ways that people can hear and understand – and with hope and humility we recognize that in ourselves.

Now let’s enter into these readings and reflect on them. Gail De George will read from the Gospel of John, and Jim De Quattro will offer questions for reflection. Feel free to focus on only one question. That may take you deeper.

READING 1 – From the Gospel of John, chapter 20 (Gail De George)

On the evening of that first day of the week [which we now call Easter],
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.

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.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim De Quattro)

This reading tells us that Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on Easter evening. What does that mean to you, that the disciples received the Holy Spirit then?

Do you feel “the peace that passes all understanding”?

In your experience, what is the relationship between being at peace and being sent?

SILENCE (Sound chime after 2 minutes – Suzie)

READING 2-- A reading from the second chapter of Acts (2:1-15) (Judy)

Suzie: Judy Sholes will now read from the second chapter of Acts.

Judy:

When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.

Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these Galileans speaking to them in their own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely,' they said, 'all these people speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in our own native language? We hear them preaching in our own different languages about the marvels of God.'

Everyone was amazed and perplexed; they asked one another what it all meant. Then Peter stood up and said, “This is what the prophet was saying: I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions, your old people dream dreams. Even on the slaves, men and women, shall I pour out my Spirit.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Jim)

When you are touched by the Holy Spirit, what visions do you see? What dreams do you dream?

In what language do you hear the Holy Spirit speaking to you? In what language do you speak the Spirit to others?

SILENCE (Sound chime after 2 minutes – Suzie)

READING 3 – REFLECTIONS drawn from Dr. C. Vanessa White, at [Catholic Women Preach](#), and Sister Mary McGlone, at [NCR](#) (Marilyn)

This reflection draws on reflections by Sister Mary McGlone and Dr. C. Vanessa White.

Think back to Easter morning. Mary met Jesus in the garden. The beloved disciple believed at the empty tomb. But neither of them was given the Spirit at those times. It was only when they gathered in community that Jesus did confer his Spirit. That theme repeats in the stories of Emmaus and Pentecost – Jesus gives us his Spirit in community.

And Jesus did so while the disciples were huddled in hiding. Jesus knew that before they could receive the Spirit, their fear needed to be calmed. So the first thing he gave them was his peace. And then he breathed on them his Spirit.

After receiving the Spirit on Easter evening, it took the disciples' time, which the scriptures call 50 days, to begin to figure out what it meant to have the Spirit of Jesus with and within them. Our capacity to live in the Holy Spirit grows over time.

Remember what we have read together since Easter. Growing in the Spirit of Jesus, the disciples began to form an inclusive and sustainable community. They added to their numbers to replace Judas among the Twelve. They saw that there were disparities in their community that needed to be addressed and that new roles needed to emerge, like Stephen's. They left the Upper Room and shared the good news in language that everyone could hear and understand. The community expanded at Pentecost because the disciples themselves were expanding their capacity to accept God's Spirit.

Isn't that how all commitments change our lives? A wedding, for instance, happens on a particular day. But a life commitment is a process that takes root long before the public event, and that continues to unfold long after. Even in Paul's road-to-Damascus experience, the scales didn't fall from his eyes immediately. It wasn't until he met with Ananias that he understood his experience and committed fully to Jesus. For Paul on the road and for a couple at a wedding, the event is simply a marker in a lifetime of

transformation. In the first century and also now, the event itself is not the beginning or the end.

Like the disciples, we need to receive the Spirit in multiple forms as we deepen our engagement. Notice the completely different ways each community describes the Spirit – as the breath of Jesus, and as tongues of fire. Isn't each of these images true to what we ourselves know of Jesus' Spirit in us? We need his Spirit as our very breath. And his Spirit can "kindle in us the fire of his love" so that we go forth, with excitement and courage, to live God's love in public.

The Holy Spirit is a living Spirit that moves the community from fear to fearlessness, from faltering to faith, from powerlessness to passionate power. Today we celebrate that the Spirit transformed individuals into an inclusive community that then became a missionary church.

Reflection Questions (Jim)



(Share slide onscreen - Betty)

Has this communal experience of Covid allowed us to know ourselves in a more inclusive way?

Where do you think we are as a community? Do we feel the peace of God in us as a whole?

Does the Spirit animate this community to action in the public square? Do you see any gifts or charisms rising in us as a community?

SILENCE (Sound chime after 2 minutes – Suzie)

SHARING (Suzie)

I invite you to share your reflections. Everyone's individual reflections help us to glimpse the many ways God is among us.

If you would like to speak, you will need to unmute yourself on your phone or in Zoom. After you speak, please mute yourself again. If more than one person speaks at once, one will go first and the other will speak after that.

Who would like to begin our sharing?

(PEOPLE SHARE)

Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

Thank you.

Now Mary Ott will lead us in prayer.

INTENTIONS (Mary Ott)

Great God, we thank you for the amazing fact that you share your own Spirit. Give us the wisdom and courage to be your Pentecost people. Be the breath of peace that fills our lives as individuals and as a community. Be the tongues of fire that impel us and that light the next step for us. Amen.

Our response to the Intentions will be: "Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer."

For the church, the people of God, that we will embody the Spirit of Jesus with inclusive, generous love. For this we pray. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For our community, that we will have the humility and courage to let God's Spirit show us our next steps. For this we pray. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For our country, we pray. In union with Catholic sisters and interfaith groups throughout the United States, we come to you in grief, mourning, and lament of the more than 100,000 people we have lost to COVID-19. Not only has this pandemic taken our brothers and sisters, it has also revealed many of the most unequal, broken pieces

of our society. We ask that, as we move forward, you may work in and through us, so that we may build your beloved community with Pentecost fervor. For this we pray.

For George Floyd and all victims of brutality and racism, that we may prove our solidarity with them. For this we pray. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For our nation and for the world community, that we will mourn *together* these grim milestones of death, so that by sharing in one suffering we may know ourselves as one family. For this we pray. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

For women religious, that we will walk with them in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable and with Earth. For this we pray. Spirit of Peace, hear our prayer.

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself as you speak. Please end your petition with "For this we pray."

(People offer prayers. When people are finished...)

We place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care, and we entrust the outcome to you. As we do, we use the words of Sister Pat Farrell.*** "There is so much more going on within and around us than we will ever be able to perceive. The unseen movement of Love is creatively holding everything together in ways infinitely beyond what we could ask or imagine." We ask the Spirit to "open space in us to flow with what we cannot see, with what is beyond us. Yet the path remains always a walk in the dark. We walk it together, summoning one another to deepening faith in the invisible energy of Love that surrounds and carries us." Amen.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Betty)

Now let us remember the night before Jesus died.

The first thing Jesus did was to give thanks.

So let us know that God is among us
and give thanks. [Pause.]

And then Jesus, who was having dinner with his friends,
looked at what was in front of him, the bread and the cup,

and he blessed them
and filled them with his presence,
and he offered them to his friends
so that they could take his own life into themselves
and be transformed.

Now we ask the Spirit of Jesus
to pour into us and into our community,
so that we become his living body,
each part sacred,
together becoming bread for the world.
[Pause.]

And on this feast of Pentecost,
when people who saw the disciples
wondered whether the disciples were filled with drink,
let us also ask the Spirit of Jesus
to fill us to overflowing like a chalice or a wineskin,
so that we become wine for the world,
a community of zest, and joy, and gratitude.

Spirit of Jesus, we are yours.
Amen.

OUR FATHER (Betty)

Now let's pray in harmony with all Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (Betty)

We conclude with a blessing for Pentecost Day by Jan Richardson. It's called "[When We Breathe Together.](#)"

This is the blessing
we cannot speak
by ourselves.

This is the blessing
we cannot summon
by our own devices,
cannot shape
to our purpose,
cannot bend
to our will.

This is the blessing
that comes
when we leave behind
our aloneness
when we gather
together
when we turn
toward one another.

This is the blessing
that blazes among us
when we speak
the words
strange to our ears

when we finally listen
into the chaos

when we breathe together
at last.

Amen.

CLOSING SONG: Send Down the Fire by Marty Haugen (Reggie)

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 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)**

Call us to witness your Kingdom,
Give us the presence of Christ;
May your holy light
Keep us shining bright,
Ever shine with the presence of Christ. **(Refrain)**

* The quote in the Introduction to Theme is from Sister Teresa Okure, in <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/1063/closure-of-churches-gods-call-to-return-to-our-roots-to-be-church-african-nun-reflects>

** The reflection draws on Sister Mary McGlone in [NCR](#) and Dr. C. Vanessa White at [Catholic Women Preach](#).

*** Sister Pat Farrell, "Leading from the Allure of Holy Mystery: Contemplation and Transformation," [address](#) at the 2014 LCWR Assembly