

Activated by the Spirit

Acts 2:1-21; I Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 7:37-39; Psalm 104:24-35 5-11-08



It is a formidable task to preach on a Sunday that combines Pentecost and Mother's Day.

Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church. The color for the day is red, representing the sizzle of the Holy Spirit. It was a major turning point in the Jesus movement. A group of frightened people, unsure of their present and their future, were suddenly inspired to become a unified body in carrying out the mission Jesus charged them with when he told them to "go out and make disciples of all nations." The Holy Spirit activated them and held them together to become the basis for what we know as "the church."

While mothers certainly are not part of the officially recognized Trinity, they often are the motivating and activating source for children and families as they work to inspire them through the example of their lives. Mothers very often hold families together, give their children the confidence and basic tools they need to face life and move out of the nest, and are a constant source of support and nurture throughout their lives. I know there are some mothers who are not very good at their jobs. I know there are some who are weary with the demands their families put on them. But, for better or for worse, I also have learned that there is truth to the old saying that, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." We are shaped in our lives by the way our mothers have handled their responsibilities and we, in turn, shape the way those who come after us in the ways they view and shape the world.

The mothers I know have tried hard to balance many roles and most have succeeded. I would not want to raise children in today's world and I am grateful that my girls are all in their thirties. That seems amazing since I believe I am just 37. I have learned through the years that we can take our children just so far in life and then we set them free to be what they will be. Our responsibilities end and our children's begin.

So, mothers and the Holy Spirit provide a base from which we live and move and have our beings in the realm of life and in our spiritual worlds.

Our scriptures for this morning all celebrate the Spirit; that revelation of God that dwells within us sparking us forward to do good things guided by our consciences. The Spirit has been in the world since it moved over the waters at the creation and it has abided with humans ever since. The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost reminded those trembling humans of the power they had to do good and spread the gospel of Christ to the world. The languages they were blessed with helped in the dissemination of that message to all those gathered in Jerusalem.

Those people from many lands had come for the celebration of the Jewish Pentecost. This was the day Jewish tradition held that the Law was given, seven weeks following Passover. The Law was and is essential to the tradition of Judaism. The coming of the Spirit to the disciples gave the meaning of the day another twist. The birth of the Christian church took place seven weeks following Easter, the resurrection.

That's why we are here this morning, because of the unifying and driving power of the Spirit. That same unifying power is with us today. It pulls us together, in spite of our individual desires and needs, to do what is best for our community of faith and our community at large. It makes us take a good look at ourselves and helps us realize that separately we can do good things but as a unified body we can manage to do even better things. Sometimes we are tired, worn out and edgy, but something sparks us to be better than we are and moves us to reveal the love of God that we carry to those who are around us.

We make this revelation in small ways, rarely with grandiose gestures. We show others how God loves us in the way we speak to them, in the way we treasure their thoughts and ideas, in the very way we carry ourselves, in the way we seek to help others find out who they are and where they are in the world. We are enabled to see others as they are and not as we want them to be when we come in touch with that "Spirit, Spirit of gentleness" that blows through the wilderness of our souls "calling and free." We manage this when the "Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stirs us "from placidness." We do this best when we awake from our slumbers and rise on the wings of the Spirit.

That's what happened on that first day of the Christian Pentecost when down in the city the Spirit, "called once again, when it blew through its people on the rush of the wind."

We need to be open to the Spirit which seeks to stir us up in our lives and which seeks to show us the way to a better understanding of who we are and the way we need to modify ourselves to be more in tune with the way we have been called to live. It is a way that is not selfish, a way that is not focused just on what we want to do. It is a way that does not seek to point to how important we are, but how important God is in our lives. It is a way that we try to impart to our children, never through the narrowness of vision but through a broadening way that points to a future that includes a realization that other people are as cherished by God as we are. Life is not only about us. The only way our world will become better is if we recognize that we do not come first in all things; that we need to put others before ourselves and allow the Spirit to guide us.

On this Mother's Day remember those who gave us life and in many instances who gave us their lives. Remember, too, the Spirit that breathed new life, courage and strength into all men and women and who sustains us to this very day.

-- Amen