



Come and See!

Pentecost, Week of May 28, 2023

The Word...

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
(from Acts 2:1-11)

“We were all given to drink of one Spirit.”
(from 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13)

“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.”
(from Jn 20:19-23)

(Note: Now that we enter Ordinary Time again, we return to the “Come and See “ format until Advent.)

Pondering the Word ...

Fire. Water. Breath. Elemental things. Things of the earth. Things essential for life.

When you think of the Holy Spirit, what image comes to mind? For a lot of people, I’m afraid, the Spirit is too mystical, too other-worldly to be a real presence in their lives. And yet the Spirit is the manifestation of the Incarnation: Earthy, real, alive, our very breath. To ignore the Spirit is to ignore our lives—again, I’m afraid many people do just that. The Holy Spirit, the living Christ who “is” — right now — not a vestige of the historical Jesus who was.

What is this awesome mystery that is taking place within me?

*I can find no words to express it; my poor hand is unable to capture it in describing
the praise and the glory that belong to the One who is above all praise, and who transcends every work...*

My intellect sees what has happened, but cannot explain it.

It can see and wishes to explain but can find no word that will suffice;

for what it sees is invisible and entirely formless, simple, completely uncompounded, unbounded in its awesome greatness.

*What I have seen is the totality recapitulated as one, **received not in essence but by participation,**
just as if you lit a flame from a flame, it is the whole flame you receive.*

St. Simeon, the New Theologian

Living the Word...

St. Simeon tells us: we receive the Spirit “by participation.” I love that! How do you participate in the life of the Spirit? The first all-important step is being present. I mentioned that as we go forward now into ordinary time, I will try, as she allows, to make the Spirit come alive for us. Pentecost—the feast of empowerment—is a call, a charge to move forward in the Spirit, not just to observe, but to participate. See this week if you can be more present to the elemental movements of the Spirit, not just in your own life, but in the lives of others. Look for opportunities to participate in the life of the Spirit. And rejoice!

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, May 29: *“And singers and dancers alike say: All my wellsprings are in you”* (Ps 87, Hebrew translation). This psalm is a tribute to Jerusalem, written as a comfort to Jews born in exile, to assure them they too are of God’s City. I like the image of singers and dancers: not people who mourn the past but are alive in the present!

Reflection/Provision: The “you” refers to Zion where God resides, and in that climate, a wellspring is a source of life (Robert Alter). We believe God’s Spirit resides everywhere, and the wellsprings of our faith are in God’s Spirit. Sing and dance (i.e., live!) today and look for the Spirit. You’ll find wellsprings of life everywhere!

Tue, May 30: *“There is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age”* (Mk 10:28-31). Peter reminds Jesus the disciples have given up a lot to follow him. Jesus responds they’ll receive back a hundred times in “the present age.” The present age thing confuses me. I get “the age to come” idea, but it doesn’t seem the disciples’ lives are very cushy after Jesus’ Ascension! **Reflection/Provision:** We (and likely some of the disciples) might imagine it is physical things they will receive—more family, more land, great wealth. Jesus is not referring to these kinds of things, but more to the sense of belonging to a community of believers who live in the present age with great joy and hope because of the Good News. So here we are in “the present age,” an age not at all different from previous ages with physical and material blessings being so important. Spend time today reflecting on being in a community of believers. Do you find joy, hope, and great wealth in community?

Wed, May 31: *“Brothers and sisters: Let love be sincere... anticipate one another in showing honor”* (Rom 12:9-16). If you’re looking for a short passage that sums up what it means to be Christian, this is a good one. It says it all. In the Catholic tradition, today’s the Feast of the Visitation. Mary learns of Elizabeth’s pregnancy and goes “in haste” to support her cousin. She anticipates Elizabeth’s needs and honors them. **Reflection/Provision:** I love those words: “anticipate one another.” Many of us go through our days locked in our own world; we may even be on our guard. Do you ever consciously anticipate with honor the needs of those around you? (And parents, I mean real needs, not the need to be on time, at the right place, in the right uniform!) Today, be like Mary. Learn and pay attention to the story of another. Anticipate their needs and honor them. Love sincerely.

Thu, Jun 1: *“Yet even God’s holy ones must fail in recounting the wonders of the LORD”* (Sir 42:15-25). *“The Lord hath not given power to the saints to declare all his marvelous works”* (Septuagint [Greek] translation). I like the Greek translation. This idea of the holy ones failing is not very encouraging! We should take comfort and hope from these words. Even the holiest among us cannot fathom the wonders of the LORD, so stop worrying! Live in joy and amazement at God’s creation. **Reflection/ Provision:** A good God-friend, a holy one, passed away yesterday, much too young. But I remember well her love of the stars, particularly meteor showers like the Perseids (which this year will be the night of August 12). She always rejoiced in the wonders of God’s creation without spending too much energy on having to figure everything out. Today, put aside your worries, your questions, and anxieties, and go “marveling” in God’s creation. Take young kids with you if you can—they are the best at finding God’s marvels—and just stroll and meander in the world. Praise God. (RIP, Kathy Baker.)

Fri, Jun 2: *Seeing a fig tree, he went over to see if he could find anything on it... it was not the time for figs. And he said, “May no one ever eat of your fruit again!”* (Mk 11:11-26). Let’s be honest here: Jesus is having a bad day! Right after this, he clears out the money changers in the temple. I guess he got up on the wrong side of the cot! (I was happy to read a similar assessment in The Jerome Biblical Commentary, so people smarter than I explain it this way too!) **Reflection/Provision:** Jesus was a human being, and passages like this remind us of his humanity, no matter how much we try to find some scriptural basis for him cursing an innocent fig tree. He got impatient, angry, sorrowful, and he could be joyful, playful, and humorous as well. The next time you find yourself wanting to curse some innocent “fig tree” for not providing you what you need, think about this passage. Maybe his Spirit will nudge you and allow you to smile instead!

Sat, Jun 3: *“I will give my teacher grateful praise. I became resolutely devoted to her”* (Sir 51:12-20). **Reflection/ Provision:** Wise prophets today say we are entering the Age of the Spirit where boundaries and limits will dissolve under her bright wings. Pray we become people of the Spirit, looking for what we have in common rather than what divides us. Devote yourself to our wise teacher and Advocate. Let her animate your life.