

The Day of Pentecost
May 19, 2013
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The Holy Spirit at Work

Three times after the Last Supper and before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus tries to help the disciples understand the work of the Holy Spirit. In today's gospel we hear the first of our Lord's teachings about the Holy Spirit near the start of his "Farewell Address" in John chapter 14, "...I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate... This is the spirit of truth... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit... will teach you everything."

The Holy Spirit will bear witness to Jesus and empower the disciples to become witnesses to God's love in Christ (15:26-27) The Spirit will "guide" the disciples into "all truth" (16:13). In John's Gospel on the evening of the first Easter Day, Jesus "breathed" on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." For John the Resurrection brings the Spirit into the lives and hearts of the disciples.

St. Luke's narrative explains that this gift of the Holy Spirit comes as believers gather in Jerusalem celebrating the ancient Jewish feast of Pentecost (commemorating Moses giving the Law) 50 days after the Passover. The story from Acts chapter 2, fulfills the promise of the Risen Jesus before he ascends into heaven. The mysterious speaking in tongues is Luke's way to tell us the Holy Spirit is guiding the disciples into all truth.

This is always the first work of the Spirit – revealing God's truth. As the Spirit reveals Jesus as God's Incarnate Son and fills Jesus with this divine identity at his baptism; so, too, the Spirit reveals God's truth to people of every language, every race. Revelation is seeing, knowing, hearing God's truth.

What truth has God revealed to you recently? Is this a new truth or confirmation of something you have experienced for some time? Jesus said that the truth will set us free (John 8:32). The Holy Spirit can give us this truth that will set us free. But sometimes we resist the truth, run from the truth; we find security in denial and deception.

The Holy Spirit also works at bringing unity. This miraculous story of the speaking in tongues, understanding many languages, is a story about truth and it is a story about unity – people of many races, many nationalities, many languages becoming one in Christ. This is the story of our faith, of Christianity, as it has spread throughout the world in all places; we are one in Christ regardless of race, nationality or language.

Revelation and reconciliation, bringing into unity those who have been divided, becomes the mission of the Church in all times and in all places. John MacQuarrie, a great 20th century theologian, has called the Holy Spirit, the "unitive being" because it is the Spirit's work to make us one – to unite God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity, and the Spirit unites God's people in all the world.

So this is our work – here and now at Grace Church – to witness, to reveal God's truth in the love of Jesus and to work for reconciliation, for unity among all people.

Every one of our program ministries, all of our worship, and our witness in the world can help others to know God's truth and invite others to be one in Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work through us and in us.

Today we make this visible especially through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (we've celebrated nine baptisms since Easter) as the newly baptized will grow into the truth of God's love in Christ and as they become new members of Christ's Body, the Church – revelation and reconciliation.

We also see this work in the bilingual celebration in English and Spanish at 9:00 am with our brothers and sisters in La Gracia. We see his work as LEM's carry the Sacrament of Holy Communion to those unable to come to church. And, finally, we see the Spirit's work as we hear the story of the first Pentecost read in several languages at the 11:15 am Eucharist.

The Holy Spirit is working in us and through us. Jesus said, "*Truly, truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these...*" This is our work, our mission – to do the works of Jesus as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-11
Romans 8:14-17
John 14:8-17, 25-27