



June 5, 2022

Eastertime—Pentecost

...he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

John 20:22



Dear Friends,

This weekend we, the Church, celebrate Pentecost. It is one of the most important feasts of the year. It is the conclusion of our celebration of the season of Easter celebrates the beginning of the Church. There are many different traditions that celebrate this feast.

In parts of Italy the custom was to have rose petals fall from the church ceiling recalls the tongues of fire that came upon the apostles. Because the Churches were decorated with roses on this Sunday in some places it was called *Pascha Rosatum*—Easter Roses. Some Christians wear red today recalling the fire of the Spirit. In France the tradition was to blow trumpets during mass to recall the sound of the driving wind of the Holy Spirit. In the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox churches, the custom is for people to bring flowers and green branches to church. This signifies the renewing of creation by the Spirit. All these customs recall the harmony the Spirit brings out of the richness of human and creation's diversity.

The word "Pentecost" is the Greek word for fiftieth. It was the word used to translate the Feast of Weeks or *Shavu'ot* which came fifty days after the celebration of Passover. Originally, it celebrated the beginning of the wheat harvest fifty days after the rye harvest. It also came to celebrate when the Lord revealed the Torah (the Law) to Moses on Mount Sinai. Every year Jewish people renew their acceptance of the Torah on this feast.

For Christians the feast of Pentecost falls fifty days after the celebration of the Passover of the Lord Jesus from death to new life. Pentecost completes what was begun in the death and resurrection of Christ. There is a harvest of new life. Now the Spirit of the Risen Jesus is breathed out into the followers of Christ. That Spirit revitalizes us and forms us into the risen body of Christ. We are empowered to continue the work of Jesus, restoring and healing a broken world by proclaiming the forgiveness of sin. We are no longer bound to our broken past but are made free and set on a new path on our way to Shalom, the Peace, of God's Kingdom. The law of God's love is now written in our very flesh.

In the gospel of John, Christ is presented to us as God's living Word. That same Word was spoken as God created all things and proclaimed them to be "good." That Word comes in our human flesh in the person of the historical Jesus. In his resurrection the Word recreates us for immortality. Just as our human breath empowers us to form and sound words it is the Spirit/breath of God that empowers God's spoken Word.

In our passage from John's Gospel, Jesus on the night of the resurrection appears to the disciples. They were hiding together out of fear that what happened to Jesus might happen to them. Then the Risen One appears and greets them with "Shalom" the peace of God which restores us to right relations with God and each other. Then he breathes on them the life breath of God. This recalls the beginning of creation when the Spirit/breath of God hovers over the primordial waters of chaos. That spirit of the spoken Word of God breathes into the chaos order and life. Jesus' action also recalls how after forming the human from the clay of the earth God breathes life into the human's nostrils.

With the coming of the Spirit the fearful disciples are transformed into bold proclaimers of the new and coming reality of God's Kingdom—a broken world is renewed, and we are made whole again. The Spirit brings harmony out of our rich diversity. God does not build factories or empires of standardized units. God cultivates gardens diverse in many differing gifts. This is the meaning of the story of the apostles going out and everyone who is from many different cultures and languages can hear the good news in their own language. God can form a community of love and service out of that we had thought to be impossible.

The feast of Pentecost challenges our hope and faith. Each week we proclaim that we "believe in the Holy Spirit." Can we let the Spirit lead us beyond our comfort zones to form communities of rich diversities and points of view? This will lead us to actualize the gifts of the Spirit—humility, kindness, forgiveness, charity and perseverance. It is not easy but like love it is worthwhile!

Christ is Risen!

St. Ron

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