

Feast of Pentecost

Cycle B

May 27, 2012 4 and 5:30pm
Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Powdered Milk and Eggs

Back in the 1940's, during World War II, many American soldiers were stationed on islands in the Pacific Ocean.

They lived in tents and did not have refrigerators or other conveniences. One challenge was that nutritionists wanted our troops to have food like milk and eggs.

Of course, these foods required refrigeration and this was not possible for our soldiers on those islands. So, in response to this need, a new form of food was developed: powdered food.

Milk and eggs were powdered, put into packages and sent to the Pacific. Then, simply by adding water to the powder, the soldiers had milk and eggs in a form that could be served every day and without refrigeration.

Who the Holy Spirit Is

Now, it may sound strange, but the development of powdered eggs and milk helps us to appreciate who the Holy Spirit is.

The Spirit is God with us in a new way or, you might say, under a new form. For thirty years, God was with us in the person of Jesus, but because Jesus was truly human, his presence was limited in time.

And so, if God was going to continue to be present among us, it would have to be in a new way. This is what Pentecost is all about.

Pentecost marks the moment when God began to be with us not in the physical body of Jesus, but in the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit. Changing regular milk and eggs into a powder helps us to understand the change in the way God is with us.

So Pentecost marks the time when God begins to be present not as someone standing alongside us, but as someone living inside us. This is who the Holy Spirit is.

What the Holy Spirit Does

And this leads us to the question: what does the Spirit do?

Today's passage from the Acts of the Apostles describes the Spirit "*as a strong, driving wind that was heard all through the house where the disciples were gathered.*" We all know that wind is beyond our control and maybe that is why it tells us something of what the Holy Spirit does.

Like the wind, God is beyond our control. The wind signifies God acting, God doing something independent of us.

The Book of Genesis describes God's action as a wind blowing and creating all that is, including human beings and human life. Here at Pentecost, the wind speaks of God creating persons of faith and a community of faith.

So the wind, the Spirit brings us alive in God and in Christ Jesus. This is what the Spirit does through the sacraments, through personal prayer, through the Scripture, and even through wisdom and compassion of one another.

How the Holy Spirit Affect Us

In doing this, how does the Holy Spirit affect us as persons?

Today's reading from Acts says that *"tongues as of fire appeared which came to rest on each one of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit."*

"And they began to express themselves in foreign tongues." In other words, the Holy Spirit enabled them to communicate with others, regardless of differences.

The Spirit creates a restlessness within us that almost drives us – like a driving wind – to overcome divisions and hostility. The Spirit drives us to seek oneness with others and not to rest unless we have done all we can to accomplish this.

The Spirit moves us to build bridges and seek common ground. This restlessness and this quest for oneness is how the Spirit affects us as persons.

Conclusion

So, who is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is God with and within us in a new way.

What does the Holy Spirit do? The Spirit creates us into persons of faith and a community of faith.

And how does the Holy Spirit affect us? One primary way is that the Spirit drives us to do all we can to experience our oneness in God with all persons.