

**Day of Pentecost Year A 2020**  
**May 31, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is the day of Pentecost, it's the day that we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. We hear this great story from the book of Acts of that Pentecost day, 50 days after Jesus was raised from the dead, and shortly after his ascension. On that day, all the disciples were gathered together the midst of the festival. And this dramatic scene unfolds where there is a sound like the rush of a violent wind that fills the house. Tongues as of fire appeared and rested above each of them, and they began to speak in other languages so that everyone could understand them in their native language.

It must have been an amazing experience. Perhaps you've even longed for something similar. It certainly would be nice to be able to feel or see the Holy Spirit's presence so clearly. If we could look at one another and see a tongue of fire above each of our heads—we could be reminded that God was present and at work in one another. And if we could look in the mirror and see that tongue of fire, we might begin to see how God is at work in our own lives too.

We live in a world where the Holy Spirit is hard to see and feel. People can go through their entire lives, and never realize that they've experienced the Spirit's presence. And even if you're looking for the Spirit's work in your life, it is still difficult to discern when something is our own work, and when it's the work of the Holy Spirit inside us.

And all of this is complicated by the fact that we love to be in control and take credit for the work that we do. Think about a time that someone admired something that you made or built—perhaps it was a sweater, a piece of jewelry, a table, a shed, or a garden. Someone says to you, “Wow, that looks really nice!” And a common response in this situation might be, “Thanks! I made it myself!” We like to show off our skills and abilities. We like to be able to share our crafts and our talents with others. And we take some pride in our accomplishments. It feels good to be recognized for our work—whether it's something we've made, or a service we've provided, or our thoughtfulness in caring for others.

But the tough part of that is when our pride goes too far. We can become so proud of our accomplishments, and so convinced that we're self-sufficient, that we are unable to see the work of the Holy Spirit through our hands. We think we've done these things all by ourselves, with our own energy, and our own mental fortitude.

And the truth is that this happens to all of us at times. I like to call it the “toddler mentality”. We get so caught up in how capable we are, and we convince ourselves that we don't need anyone's help. Just like the 3-year-olds I've known through the years, we have the temptation to want to shout in defiance to those around us, “I do it *myself!*” We become unwilling to accept that we've had any help in our work—whether it is the work of a teacher who shared their wisdom, or a friend who encouraged us, or the Holy Spirit who gifted us with our talents and empowered, strengthened and guided us.

But in reality, we don't do these things on our own. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, even when we don't see it. Imagine the disciples as they reflected on the events of that Pentecost day. What if they had gotten caught up in their own pride and abilities? Perhaps they might have taken credit for being able to speak in tongues on their own, or for being able to communicate in such a way that everyone understood them. Yet, from our perspective, we know that the Holy Spirit was at work.

The same is true for us. The Holy Spirit is also at work in our lives. It may not be as easy to pinpoint as the sound of rushing wind, or tongues of fire, or speaking in other languages, but the Holy Spirit is working in us, and guiding us throughout our lives.

One of my favorite Bible verses about the Holy Spirit is from Isaiah 11, and it is paraphrased in baptism, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on you, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” God promises us in baptism that the Holy Spirit will be with us. Just like the Spirit was a gift to the church and the disciples at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is a gift for each one of us now. It gives us wisdom and helps us understand what is the will of God. It guides us to truth, it strengthens us when we are weak and lost, and provides us with knowledge and gifts to serve in the world.

Even if we don’t always feel it, the Holy Spirit is at work. The Holy Spirit guides to show compassion to our neighbors, to care about our community, and to speak out for those with no voice. The Holy Spirit leads us to use whatever gifts we have been given—our talents, our finances, our mind, and our bodies—in service to God’s world. The Spirit working in us looks different for each individual, but as we look beyond our pride, we begin to see God’s guiding hand active in our work.

This is the gift that Jesus promised before he ascended. This is the gift that came to the disciples at Pentecost, and this is the gift that each of us receives in baptism. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us, strengthen us, and empower us. And with our hands, God is able to transform our world so that all may know God’s love and care. Thanks be to God. Amen.