



The Day of Pentecost

May 19, 2002

Acts 2:1-21

Ps 104

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

John 20:19-23

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

I don't know exactly what happened on that Pentecost Day in Jerusalem fifty days after Christ's resurrection from the dead. I don't know what people saw or what people heard. And frankly speaking, I really don't care. I am here to tell you, however, that from where I stand this morning, from where I stand every Lord's Day, I see tongues, as of fire, appearing among you, and a tongue resting on each of you, and each of you filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as St. Paul tells us in the second reading for this morning: to each of you is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Each and every one of you here was filled with the Holy Spirit when you were baptized, each and every one of you here is continually being filled with the Holy Spirit and each of you possesses different gifts for the upbuilding of the people of God, the Body of Christ.

Let me tell you what I see and hear and experience and know from where I stand.

I can't begin to count how many people have told me that they come to worship at St. Paul Church because here people are not all the same. People tell me that they want to be among the whole people of God – not just among the married, middle-class – not just among the gay or the not-gay, not just among the affluent. You tell me that you want to be where there are old people, children, not-so-affluent people, married people, people in wheelchairs, people who aren't all white or European-American. You want to be among people who aren't all liberal or conservative or lukewarm or passionate, where things are sometimes well-done and other times far from perfect or polished. You know or you sense that here are others who are broken in body, mind, or spirit. Being here in all your diversity, you are for one-another a gift of the Spirit, testifying with your very presence that the Body of Blood of Christ are given and shed for all – for all — for the forgiveness of sin. And tongues, as of flame, do dance on each of your heads and each of you is filled with the Holy Spirit.

You who are children, your gift is to remind us what it is to receive Christ with the childlike faith Jesus commends to us. Your enthusiasm as you dip your little hands into the font to bless yourselves with the sign of the cross, your devotion to the baby Jesus in the Epiphany tableau, and your very infant baptisms show us that the mysteries of faith do not depend on intellectual understanding or maturity. And your noise and your crying remind us that in becoming one of us in Jesus, God was once a little child who cried, who threw up, who squirmed in Mary's arms, and was able to make as much noise as the most rambunctious of you. And I must tell you that one of these little ones is truest priest to me as he raises his tiny hand to bless me at the end of the liturgy when I give the benediction. Children, I see tongues, as of fire, dancing over your heads, and each of you is filled with the Holy Spirit.

And you who have lived the faith for many years, though your sight may be dimmed, your presence is radiant and your wisdom and remembrances enrich us weekly. You who give offerings, be they small or

large, you enable the ministry of this parish. And you who have known great suffering, your faith, even in the midst of pain, inspires us, encourages us, and keeps the cross of Christ before our eyes. All of you who carry heavy burdens remind the rest of us that it is the calling of all of us to bear one another's burdens; likewise, those who are joyous, you help us fulfill the command to rejoice with one another. I see tongues, as of fire, dancing over your heads, and each of you is filled with the Holy Spirit.

And you who mourn, your grief and your tears testify to the great power of love, and you teach us that we must love one another, for what we are, while we yet have the time. And you who labor with mental illness, you help us to understand our own fragility and our own brokenness. And you who are poor, it is in your faces that we are allowed see the face of Christ. You who have been in prison or under a cloud of public guilt and shame, you teach us that Christ's love and grace are for all people, and you force us to be honest and acknowledge that we have all sinned and fallen astray. I see tongues, as of fire, dancing over your heads, and each of you is filled with the Holy Spirit.

And in your prayers, all of you intercede with God for one another and for the world. And even if you don't know how to pray, or aren't paying attention, or even if you have great doubts, don't worry, for the Holy Spirit knows what is in your hearts, and the Spirit prays for you with sighs too deep for words. And I see tongues, as of fire, dancing over your heads, and each of you is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Baptized people of God, members of Christ's body, each one of you through no merit or choice of your own has been filled with the Holy Spirit, and each and every one of you, gifted by the Spirit, is continually being given a ministry in the Body of Christ. Look around you. There are tongues, as of fire, dancing on the heads of every one of us, and we are all filled with the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's various gifts. Now then, gifted, Spirit-filled children of God, go forth, go out from this place. A weary world awaits you, for *you are* the Body of Christ for the world.