

St Thomas' and Saint Thomas Church of the Air
 Pentecost
 June 8, 2025
 rmcneely+

and suddenly there came ... as of a rushing mighty wind
 and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire
 and it sat upon each of them

We celebrate today
 That mysterious
 seminal event . . . Pentecost.
 With your indulgence let me answer a few of the questions
 That Pentecost evokes:
 Pentecost has an AKA: "Whitsunday" in our Prayer Books
 White Sunday

You see in ancient times baptisms occurred in cycles
 Baptisms were preceded by a time of adult instruction
 And on the day, there were many adults to be baptized.
 Pentecost became known as White Sunday
 Or Whitsunday
 Named after the sea of people wearing white gowns.
 Not unlike little James Edward, today.
 Annie Leonard now you see another reason I was so excited to
 receive your note about Baptizing James Edward on this day.
 It could not be more appropriate.
 Today James Edward received the Holy Spirit
 Just as the Apostles and the Church so long ago.

But the day is commemorated in red
 Red for the fire of God's love
 That St Luke wrote about.

The name Pentecost is derived from *pente*, an ancient Greek word
 meaning 5
 It is 50 days since the Resurrection of our Lord.

The Jews celebrated Pentecost for centuries before we did.
 For them it is 50 days since Passover and a major feast.
 Pentecost is the third of the three days that our Canons
 Require all good Christians to observe
 By going to church
 Yet, it has never achieved the attention of Christmas and Easter
 The other two days of obligation.

Pentecost celebrates the birth of the church
 The historic occasion
 When the 12 became the body of Christ, the church

But it is shrouded in mystery.
 The accounts of what happened that day
 Are limited by the human mind
 And by human vocabulary
 This overwhelming cosmic event
 exceeded the ability of those present to put it into words.
 So Luke tells us
 It was as of a mighty rushing wind, and
 Cloven tongues. Like as of fire

Jesus had been talking about it for months
 He told them that He would be put to death
 But that He would not leave them comfortless
 That He would send them the comforter.

But they could not comprehend how this beloved man
 This Son of God
 Could be put to death
 Could leave them

And it seems as many times as He told them He would send the Comforter

They could not get past the fact of His being gone

And could not hear the part about the comforter

And in the days following His Ascension

They must have been lost

Bewildered

Leaderless

But He told them the comforter would come.

We need another of those “old English language” talks.

Comforter in 1611 was not the word that you and I know today.

The root of the word is “fort”. Yep:

Just like the military building

Fortification, Fortress, like the forts we know here:

Ft Point, Ft Cronkite, Ft Baker, Ft Mason, Funston

A strong, impenetrable structure

High walls

For defense; protection.

So comfort was a strong fort, not a warm fuzzy quilt for your bed.

And the Comforter was of tremendous strength

To protect them, protect us.

Jesus told them what the comforter would do:

“When the Comforter is come

He will testify of me

And ye shall bear witness

Because you have been with me from the beginning”.

He promised that the Comforter would always be with them

Will always be with us

The Comforter is the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete

And is within almost everyone

Certainly every Christian

Every one of you. And now little James Edward too.

Jesus refers to the Comforter as a witness who shall testify;
 Something of which this lawyer knows.
 He will give testimony, tell us the truth
 Just like a witness on the stand in court.
Who will remind or call to remembrance to the 12
 Those things that Jesus had told them
 Those things He had done
 In the 3+ years they were together
And so it is with us.

Have you noticed times in your life
 When,
A thought comes to mind
 A recollection
 A bit of scripture
 An experience of long ago
 Something that someone said
And all of a sudden
 Some Christian principle
 Some foggy, troubling concept of God
 Becomes clear
 Clear as though
 It has been there all along?
My friends, that is the witness Jesus is talking about
 That is the Holy Spirit working in your lives.

It is as if every now and again
 The Holy Spirit
 Sits you down
 Selects and reorganizes what you have experienced
 And shows you a truth
Now that you have lived a little
 And are re-acquainted with it
 It falls into place
 And makes sense.

Reading scripture can be a bit like that
 You pick up your Bible
 Or you hear the Epistle or Gospel on a Sunday,
 That you've read or heard a hundred times
 But this time
 There is some new understanding or meaning.
 And you ask yourself: why didn't I see that before?
 Haven't we all had experiences like these?

It is said of scripture that the Holy Ghost
 Breathes into the words of scripture as they are written
 And breathes them out to you as you read them.

We all know that the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Trinity
 St Augustine said: the Holy Spirit is the love
 That the Father and the Son realize between each other.
 It is the spirit of Divine Love.
 In eternity one either burns with the love of God
 Or is burned by it.

And how perfectly fitting it was that
 it was at the institution of that Divine Love
 That the church was brought forth that day.
 It was as of a might rushing wind
 It was like as of cloven tongues of fire
 You see the church was the creation of God
 The apostles didn't call a meeting
 Peter made a motion
 James seconded it
 That they form the church of Jesus Christ
 All in favor say aye
 It was the creation of God that day.
 Instituted of divine love.

It marked a new beginning in history
 A new life
 A new power given to mankind.
 The Holy Ghost is the source and giver of Grace.
 That mysterious gift of God
 That brings us closer to God.

It was on Pentecost Sunday in 1992, 33 years ago
 before this miracle building was built,
 Archbishop Morse said to the St Thomas congregation:
 “In all situations that come to us in life
 We can say
 “All is Grace”
 that the Holy Spirit will make all things good
 in the fullness of His time.
 Within the endless bounty of His love
 that transcendent Spirit
 was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost.”
 Morse often told us “All is Grace”.
 And as the Grace of the Holy Spirit
 Was poured out upon the 12 that day.

Peter,
 The fisherman
 That seemingly uneducated oaf
 Who lacked the filter to guard what he said
 Who denied even knowing Jesus three times during His trial,
 Walked out of that room in Jerusalem
 And delivered one of the most eloquent, articulate
 Moving and
 Convincing sermons ever given
 And when he was done
 3000 people were baptized.
 Such is the power of the Holy Spirit.
 Such is the power of the love of God.

We see the evidence of the Holy Spirit
Even if we cannot see it, itself

It seems that the Holy Spirit is not something or someone
With us at birth.
We receive it only sacramentally.

We all know people in whom the Holy Spirit is strong
And even if we can't quite articulate what we sense
We know it is there.

The Holy Spirit is instituted in us at our baptism
And again at our confirmation
And for the clergy again
At the ordination of deacons
And again at the ordination of priests

I think we need the Holy Spirit to be replenished from time to time
A priest friend of mine once suggested that
We seem to have a leak.

For some tragic few, the Holy Spirit is never within them
They can know nothing of the love of God
Their lives are often a ruined, tragic, empty hulk

But for those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells and is strong,
Life and love is full and rich.
The love of life and the love of God
Cannot be separated

In a moment we, as the Body of Christ, His Church
Will invoke God the Holy Spirit to descend
and consecrate this bread and wine
into the Sacrament of Our Lord's death and resurrection.
His body and blood,
The eternal transfixed in time.

When we are weak in spirit
 In faith
 Or in despair,
We are given the grace to live life unafraid
 Through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We will tackle the Trinity next Sunday
Jesus is almost tangible for us, perhaps because He is fully human
 And fully divine
God, less tangible
But the Holy Spirit seems entirely amorphous
 And we have to spend time to consider
 Who
 Or what the Holy Spirit is.

I leave you this Pentecost Sunday with this thought:
It was by the Holy Spirit
 By the love of God
 That our church was born on this day
 In that closed room in Jerusalem
 All those thousands of miles and many years ago
And it is by the love of God
 That the church has survived
 and flourished over the centuries
 Despite the onslaught brought against it.

Is it by the Love of God
 That you are here today.
 That you worship God
 That you give Him of your time, talents and treasure?

What will you do with the Love of God today
To glorify Him
To reflect His love in your life
To be that living example
Of life lived in the love of God for all to see?

It is the Holy Spirit living in you and in me that will be our guide
and witness.

All is Grace