

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Whitsunday/Pentecost
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rmcneely+

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

Jesus told them it would happen.
But as with much of the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension
They could not understand
Could not comprehend and assimilate what He told them.

So here are the Apostles, 50 days after the Resurrection
And 10 days or so after the Ascension
Gathered in Jerusalem,
In a room by one accord.
In the city where He had been crucified,
The city where all but John had deserted Him
The city where they had first seen Him at the Resurrection.

The timing was propitious.
It was also a major feast of the Jews
And thousands of Jews crowded Jerusalem
From all the provinces to celebrate the feast.
The proclamation of the Gospel of the Christian Pentecost
would be as far reaching as possible
as the Jews in pilgrimage
returned to their distant homes with the news.
The Jewish Pentecost took place 50 days after Passover
And was a commemoration of when Moses
returned from Sinai with the Law,
the Ten Commandments and Jewish Laws.
The Christian Pentecost marked the New Covenant of love
that superceded the Old covenant of the law.

It was beyond historical significance
It was the inauguration of a new dispensation of grace.

Without warning or fanfare
The very air became tense, crackling and charged.
We would say electric.
And suddenly in this closed room
There arose something they could only describe
As a mighty rushing wind.
And something ignited in their midst that
they could describe only as a flame
Settling upon each of them.

And in the flash of that instant
Several things happened at once
That would change the course of history
for all mankind
Forever.

Jesus fulfilled His promise that He made at the Last Supper
in the Farewell Discourse,
And did not leave them comfortless.
The Holy Ghost was infused and became part
of each of them.

That same thing happened to each of us
At our baptism and confirmation.

He goes by a number of names these days
The Holy Ghost
The Holy Spirit
The Comforter
The Paraclete
Spiritus Sanctus

However you best know Him,
He is infused and inhabits your heart and soul now.

Despite the intimate nature of His being
 He is a mystery to most of us.
 Yet He is involved in almost all that we do
 But we don't know Him well.
 Let's dig in to what we know.

He has been there since the Beginning

From creation.

Genesis:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

There He is; perhaps hidden from our understanding;

“the Spirit of God”.

By whom God created everything.

It was by His breath that God breathed life into Adam.

The Hebrew and Greek words for breath

Also meant spirit, that illusive and vacuous notion

Of an ephemeral being.

There are far too many cameo appearances in the Old Testament for us to consider this morning

But in the New Testament

He comes forward and makes known.

St John told us about Him at Jesus' baptism

by John the Baptist at the Jordan,

And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove.

50 days before

in that upper room on the night in which He was betrayed

Jesus had promised He would come, the Comforter

Now, we need another of those 1611 language lessons:

The word “comfort” had a whole different meaning then.

Separate the word into its syllables:

Com and fort.
 The “fort” part is the clue.
 A fortified edifice in the military sense.
 A fort, as in Ft Funston or Ft Baker, Ft Point or Ft Cronkhite.
 The Comforter in 1611 is above all, a source of our strength.
 Spiritual strength.
 Jesus told us He would bear witness to the truth.
 As if taking the witness stand in court, taking the oath
 And telling the truth.
 That He would call to remembrance
 All that Jesus had told the 12 in His 3-year ministry.
 All that is written for us in scripture.
 When we most need them.

The Holy Spirit comes bearing gifts, the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit
 Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge
 Piety and holy fear.
 All at work in our lives
 To shape and nourish them.
 If those are the attributes of the Holy Ghost
 How do we perceive Him in our lives?

That is a personal and intimate question
 So let me try to show you some random examples
 You have prayed the Holy Communion Service hundreds and for
 some, thousands of times in your life.
 But have you ever had the experience of a word of the liturgy
 Or a hymn jumping out at you?
 it has been there all along
 But now with a focus that you have never thought of before.
 And the more you think of it
 The more meaning it has?

Have you ever been drawn to a flower that you have seen
 numerous times in your life?

But this time, you notice the subtle nuances of it
A color deep in the center
A stamen or intricate feature that had escaped your notice?
How marvelous is Our Lord's creation?

You are standing in the line at the grocery store
And a baby's grin captures your attention?
As she lights up in response to your attention.
You rise early for no particular reason
And experience a spectacular sunrise, like no other.
Before you know it, you utter; "nice one God".

Weeks after your fervent prayer for someone or something
You realized your prayer has been answered?
Maybe not the way you had expected or hoped?

It was on Pentecost Sunday in 1992, 34 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.

There is more;

Pentecost marks the day that the Church was founded.

The Church of Jesus, the Christ.

Jesus had already ordained them at the Resurrection

There were priests to serve the Church and all was ready.

On this day, with Jesus at the right hand of God

And the Holy Ghost imbedded

The Church began its ministry.

Peter, that lovable oaf with the uncontrollable tongue

Walked into Jerusalem from which he had fled for his life
not many days before

and gave a sermon of the ages.

This uneducated fisherman, who had denied Jesus 3 times

On the day of the crucifixion

Reached and moved so many, that 3000 were baptized.

His words were understood by people from distant lands

Who only knew their native language.

His words were simultaneously and miraculously heard
in the separate languages of many disparate people.

All who heard him, heard him in their own language.

From that day, the love of God spread around the globe.

All the way to this little miracle of a Church

Where the love of God thrives

In the city named for a 12th century saint.

Some say the Holy Ghost is like the wind

You cannot see the wind itself

Only how it effects things.

You don't see the wind

But you see everything it moves

The leaves and the branches on the trees

The litter tumbling down Sacramento Street

The clouds and the fog drifting over and through town.

Ripples and white caps on the Bay.

Full sails driving boats across the Golden Gate

The Holy Ghost is like that.

We can't see Him do it

But we know of His work in our lives.

Watch for Him

He lives within you and within all Christian People.

It is He and His 7 gifts who is our spiritual motivator.

The guiding power of our conscience

The well-spring of the love of God in our lives.

Like as a rushing mighty wind

And a roaring fire all at the same time.

All is Grace.

