

Thomas R. Cook
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota
8:00 and 10:00 a.m. Celebrations of Holy Eucharist
The Day of Pentecost: Whitsunday; June 9, 2019

“Drunk? Not Exactly...”

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21 (Pentecost C, RCL)

So the sisters at the convent had gathered around the Mother Superior, who was clearly near the end of her life now. And they waited upon her day and night, brought her what she needed, read to her and prayed for her. But she was silent. And though they tried to feed her, she would barely eat or drink anything. So one enterprising young nun took it upon herself to take the warm milk delivered each evening to the Mother in hopes she would drink it, which she never did, and that nun poured into it a very generous amount of whiskey that had been given to the sisters for Christmas cheer many years ago, though they never used it. And she brought the —shall we say “enhanced” — warm milk to the Mother, who, to everyone’s surprise, drank every last drop. And her eyes popped open a bit, she looked all around her, and the sister gathered round knew she saw them, and they asked: “Mother, what wisdom would you impart to us now at life’s end?” And she sat up in the bed, pointed out the window to the pasture beyond and said: “Don’t... ever... sell that cow!” (From Synthesis for Pentecost A 2011).

Okay, okay, I know that may be a little too irreverent for our purposes on a Sunday morning. But something has to move our spirits. And it’s not the first time that those kind of spirits have been mistaken for another kind of Spirit moving in the

life of the Church. It's just 9:00 in the morning when we hear Jesus' disciples being accused of public drunkenness, some irreverent or inexplicable display of, what, enthusiasm? Excitement? Happiness? Newly filled with *THE* Spirit, these people who had been pining away for weeks following the death of Jesus, moping around together, hiding out together, being quiet and afraid together... these people suddenly burst on the scene in the capitol city with a fervor never seen before. And with all the noise and the babbling going on from Jesus' disciples trying to explain what is happening to them, it begins to dawn on the international crowd that, "*Hey! We don't speak Hebrew, but we can tell what they're saying.*" Yeh, this is a work of the Spirit alright, but not the spirits of which the disciples are being accused of drinking for breakfast. Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day beyond the Passover observances of the Jews, is the day that Jesus' followers come into their own a bit, laying down their sadness, putting aside their fear, and remembering what Jesus had promised them... "*...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. [So...] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*"

Wow. What a breath of fresh... wind. A fresh breeze of God's spirit. No more fear. No more hiding. We've got something to share, and it's been a long time coming. To all you people out there, no matter from where you come, no matter what

language you speak, the Spirit of God is with you. The Peace of God is available to you. The love of God is for you. Pentecost, it seems to me, is the day that Jesus' first followers finally get it... they begin to fully understand that Jesus is not just for *them*, that he is not just their next struggling emperor or general or chief executive or president. Jesus was showing them God. All along. By the way he lived, by the way he sacrificed, by the way he challenged, by the way he respected others... by the way he offered love to everyone.

So I think it's a pretty good idea that every year we get a little reminder of these gifts of the Spirit in the celebration of Pentecost Day. If we are willing to go along for the ride, there's something about living in the Spirit that animates us, empowers us, strengthens us in our faith... something that pops open our eyes and makes us say, "Don't ever sell that cow!" Don't ever let go of the Spirit. Don't forget. Even when life gets challenging, even when we bear the burdens of sadness, even when the babbling of cynical voices grows louder and the promulgation of fear and hate seem stronger, "...do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid," says Jesus.

That first Pentecost of the Church may have been a day that began in confusion, but it ends in a renewed joy and a renewed faith in Jesus. Well, really... it

doesn't end. We're still doing it. We're sharing that same Spirit with each other this morning. We're hearing those things we need to hear, saying those things we need to say, and I trust we are experiencing some sense of joy and energy and reassurance and caring with and for each other, surrounded by the wind of God's Spirit. (We share it with Emmy and Vivian to be baptized into Christ with us this morning and with their families and friends.)

We are not deluded, or simple, or misguided, or even drunk, as some might say. After all, it's only (8:00 / 10:00) in the morning! (Of course if you were a stranger walking in here during the reading from Acts, you might think something weird is going on...) What we are, or what I hope we surely seek to be, is faithful, hopeful, trusting, generous, peaceful, enthusiastic, even talkative sharers and followers of the Way of Jesus Christ.