

Great Holy Spirit

This Sunday we will celebrate Pentecost and the Holy Spirit being unloosed in the world in a whole new way, a way that transformed the disciples of Jesus from fearful group locked behind closed doors into a people spilling out into the streets unafraid to proclaim God's love in a whole new way.

The great Holy Spirit's movement through our lives asserts that newness *is* possible---newness that we can't predict or manage—we can only hold on for the glorious ride! It is no wonder the Spirit's movement is so unsettling.

But if we can shed our resistance and our fear to the Spirit's invitation to grow and move so much is made possible! When we embrace the promise of God that lies at the heart of the Spirit's movement, new and wonderful, life-giving power moves through us.

This is the power, that once unleashed, lets families get past old, disabling fractures. This healing power lets the church get past old resistances and factions so that what becomes important is a shared, vibrant life where we do not have to create winners and losers inside or outside of these walls.

When the Spirit is released, our lives and beliefs often collide; our old way of understanding collides with the promise of transformation and suddenly we have choices to make. This can be an uneasy feeling, but we need to listen closely to what the Spirit is trying to teach us. We know we have learned to love in the Spirit when we are no longer frightened, hostile, resistant, or threatened in our lives.

The Holy Spirit grows, enlightens and strengthens us as individuals and we become focused on the whole; we live not for ourselves, but for the community of faith and all who might benefit from our compassion and love. It is as a collective that we best grow in the service of others.

And when one person moves toward a wholeness that casts out old fear and persistent demons, then others are made stronger. This is how we allow the Spirit to transform our families and communities. Each of us offer up our fragile little lives to mingle with each other's until we are flowing into a robust stream of hopefulness and excitement; hopefulness for who we are becoming and forgiveness for who we are not yet.

When we reject the Holy Spirit's movement, we remain trapped in old hostilities and quarrels and we get stuck with old crippling identities.

On the global scale, our participation in the love of the Holy Spirit helps us to break the old patterns of war, hate and greed, and we can see clearly that the world is pain but that we can be healing partners with God.

The Holy Spirit, God's energizing presence among us, is the life force that drives us beyond ourselves. It is this Spirit that whispers to us of the great quest within that makes life alive with a purpose; a purpose which is stubbornly felt even in the midst of chaos and that calls us into something larger.

The Holy Spirit suffuses all of life; it calls us into the mystery that is God and reminds us of what it means to follow Jesus. Often we lose the trail but at the heart of what Jesus taught us is how to love God and our neighbor in a way that surpasses easy answers and categories. The Spirit reminds us and calls us to the fullness of who God created us to be.

As Joan Chittister says, "The Holy Spirit is the great anti-gravitational force that calls us out of our private faith into everywhere. It is the force that keeps us moving toward and through the black holes of life certain that in the other side of them is light, waiting and wishing us on."^[1]

The Holy Spirit comes so that we need never stay locked into ways of being that lead to death and disintegration. Today we receive this simple affirmation: power for a full and fearless life is unloosed. We are offered healing for our addiction to fear and anxiety. This is a generous alternative that God gives to us. It asks us to make bold moves.

This Sunday we will renew our Baptismal Covenants. The life of Christ into which we are all baptized and that we pledge to show forth is the promise of no more frightened hearts, but hearts alive with courage and hope.

We are pledging to play our part in creating a Church and world that is alive with the ability to speak and understand one language—and that is the language of God’s unceasing love for the world and all who are in it!

Come Holy Spirit, come.

Happy Pentecost, Stephanie+

^[1] Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*.