

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

There are only a few days in the Church year that the Church brings out the *red color* we see today and which is so beautiful. And today is one of those days--the Day of Pentecost--when we especially focus on the *Holy Spirit*.

What may be surprising to discover about the Holy Spirit is that it is far from being only an esoteric matter for clergy to think about. And the Holy Spirit also is not a concern only for Christians who lean toward Pentecostal, charismatic, or contemporary praise worship. But, actually, the Holy Spirit covers this entire era of human history after the ascension of Jesus into the unseen world of God.

Because Christ is risen...and ascends to God...then comes the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in the gospel today, even says:

“...I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...[and when] the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”

Jesus so clearly points his disciples toward the next movement of God in the *Holy Spirit* that it could give us pause and make us wonder...Well, why were the early believers not named after the Holy Spirit *instead of being called* “Christ-ians”? Why were we not called something like “Spirit-ualists”? Jesus himself points to the reason when he further said in the gospel today:

“[The Advocate] will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you...”

In other words, the Holy Spirit does not point to itself, but to Jesus...and the Holy Spirit does not have a different mission, but continues the mission of Jesus. The Holy Spirit continues the living work and the presence of Jesus in the world after Jesus’ ascension.

This makes the Holy Spirit, in a sense, *doubly invisible*. The Holy Spirit is invisible as a *spiritual reality* can be...and the Holy Spirit is also invisible because it seeks to always be *transparent to Jesus*, opening a continuing path from Jesus in the unseen world of God to us in the seen world. It is no wonder then that we hardly ever think to name the Holy Spirit in our personal prayers or thoughts. But you will notice that our shared liturgy every Sunday morning always names the Holy Spirit repeatedly. We could say that the ancient tradition of our Sunday liturgy intends that we never forget the Holy Spirit even in its doubly invisible work.

[And a quick aside: One thing that makes it easy to avoid referring to the Holy Spirit is just the awkwardness of the pronoun issue: The Bible and Christian tradition has variously used male, female, and gender neutral pronouns. So I personally tend to use “it” when referring to the Holy Spirit, which is admittedly a poor compromise since it makes the Holy Spirit sound more like a “thing” than the *personal* God. So, you just have to make your own choice, knowing it is always going to be a only a partial truth.]

And so it is appropriate that on the Day of Pentecost, and also on Trinity Sunday next Sunday, that the Holy Spirit receives the attention it deserves. Because the Holy Spirit is about a very practical matter for Christians when we take Jesus seriously...because the gospel story leaves us with a big question: *Since Christ is risen...and has ascended to God...then what’s next?*

And there has long been a tendency for Christians, in forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit, to imagine that since Christ has ascended, that things don’t circle back to Christ again until we die, or until the end of time. And that can seem to be true since things are easily enough messed up in the meantime. But the naming of the Holy Spirit

points to the words of Jesus and the experience of the Church, that *the Holy Spirit has in fact continued the living work and presence of Jesus in the world.*

So, believing in the Holy Spirit means that we then have to learn how to look for the Holy Spirit.

It is not enough for us to ask every day or every week: *Well, what's going wrong now?! If we are going to believe in the Holy Spirit then we have to learn to also ask some very different questions: Where in the midst of all this can the Holy Spirit be found working, in the spirit of Jesus, for healing and peace? Where is the Holy Spirit be calling us to do something in response?*

So, I am going to venture, myself, to say where I believe the Holy Spirit has been in my experience of this past week. Because I do believe that Jesus moves through the Holy Spirit in the real details of our lives.

- I believe the Holy Spirit is in the midst of the *excitement...* that has been emerging for what we can do to make Grace Church a more hospitable and joyful place for *children...with a new playground...* and the possibilities for making Grace a more hospitable and joyful place for *adult parishioners and the public...with new appealing ways to experience our church grounds.*
- I believe the Holy Spirit was present in the clear affection, good humor, and truth telling spoken at the memorial service I officiated for a member of our Keswick community, Mac Vanderploeg.
- I believe the Holy Spirit can participate in hard truth telling and the lament it can evoke...as I experienced in reading more about Israel and Gaza this week. The lament I felt was, as Romans says, with “sighs too deep for words”—can in fact be the Holy Spirit’s intercession to God within us. Who could have imagined that, if we had not been told?!
- And I believe that in some very honest and heartfelt conversations I have had this past week, sharing good news gratefully, and bad news compassionately, that the Holy Spirit was present.

How might you venture to say, looking back on *your* week, where the Holy Spirit may have been present, without your realizing it at the time?...

Because...it all comes down to...learning how to look.