

## **PENTECOST SUNDAY (5/30-31/2009)**

*Acts 2/1-11, Psalm 104, 1 Corinthians 12/3-13, John 20/19-23*

“Spirit” can be an elusive concept to nail down.

What do we mean when we say an individual has “spirit”?

What do we mean when we say a school or an organization or a parish has “spirit”?

What does “spirit” look like? Who has ever seen “spirit”?

Notwithstanding our ongoing questions about the nature of “spirit”, on this weekend throughout the world, the Church celebrates the feast of Pentecost, that moment in time when the Holy Spirit descended on the first followers of Jesus.

In Luke’s *Acts of the Apostles*, the Holy Spirit makes a powerful and dramatic entrance: “*And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a driving wind...then there appeared to them tongues as of fire which parted and came to rest on each one of them.*”

So fire and wind are a manifestation of God’s Spirit, but that’s not news; we’ve known that from the Old Testament.

What happens next, however, is somewhat baffling; filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples begin to speak in different tongues, and it seems that folks from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem are able to understand!

Not nearly as remarkable, the *Gospel of John* reports the coming of the Holy Spirit differently; Jesus quietly breathes on the gathered followers and says: “*Receive the Holy Spirit.*”

He then exhorts them to forgive sins and love the sinners.

Speaking not as an expert, but as one trying to understand, I tell myself that both manifestations of the Spirit could have taken place, almost as if in two distinct steps.

There could have been an early (on Easter night) preview of “coming attractions”, meant to prepare the frightened followers of Jesus for what was to come.

*John* is the narrator of that scenario. (*John 20/22-23*)

Luke’s version, some fifty days later and after Christ’s ascent to the Father, might have been the definitive sending forth of these newly inspired believers in the risen Jesus.

They were impelled out of the cozy upper room where they had been taking refuge, and out onto the street, into the world, to tell the world what had happened.

They had the “Spirit” and it showed.

It showed in the confident way they carried themselves, in their speech understandable to all, in their willingness to shout out their allegiance to Jesus Christ even in the face of obvious disbelief and considerable danger.

Gone were the cowering, fearful, self-focused disciples, and, in their place, came men and women with a purpose – to do what Jesus had asked them to do: To forgive, to act as Jesus had, to heal old hurts and patch up old grudges; to share their goods with others less fortunate, to announce the possibilities of peace, to believe.

Sounds like something we could all benefit from, even in our day.

Holy Spirit, there is still much to be done!

Fill us with your love and send us!