

I'm in the confessional with someone whose life is a mess, and words come from my mouth that touch the deep places of pain, and they release the person from shame and self-condemnation. And it's not my brilliance as a spiritual director that gives voice to those words.

I'm praying with someone facing surgery, or someone moving towards death, and as I pray I can see anxiety and fear depart, as peace descends on the person. And it wasn't my skill or words of compassion that bestowed that peace.

I'm pondering a scripture passage, one I've prayed over a hundred times, and a new insight, a new nugget of wisdom, a new glimmer of the richness God's Word, marvels me. And it's not my years of bible studies that illumine the page and my mind.

In all these ways, and countless more, it is the Spirit of God working in and through me.

But Pentecost isn't about me. It's about you and God.

So, what about you? What have been your own encounters with the Holy Spirit, alive in you, stirring in you, shining through you?

Was there a time when, quite unexpectedly, you knew that you were in the presence of the Holy?

A time when you felt enfolded in a love beyond all telling?

A time when you knew, in your heart and bones and guts, that God was with you?

Was there a time when you were suddenly moved to pray for someone, or to forgive somebody, or to come to the aid of another?

Was there a time when an ordinary event, an experience often overlooked or taken for granted, suddenly revealed to you that you were standing on the threshold of the Transcendent?

Perhaps it happened when you received the Eucharist, like you had hundreds of times, and then all of a sudden you were swept up by the realization that it really truly is the very Body and Blood of Christ! And you want to fall to your knees in thanksgiving and adoration.

Perhaps it happened when you looked upon your spouse or your child, as you have a thousand times, but this time you glimpse the miracle of the love you have for them, the miracle of the love they have for you, the miracle of the Love of God who has brought into existence those loves and bound you together; and you are flooded with tears of joy and gratitude and awe.

Perhaps it happened when, in reciting the words of a familiar prayer, you found yourself for the first time using your own words to pray to the Lord about your real life:

the things that hurt,

the things that worry,  
the things that make you thankful or joyful;  
and in the silence then you heard the voice of the Lord say  
to you, “I love you, I take great delight in you.”

In all those ways, an myriad more, the Holy Spirit hovered  
over you, just as surely as the Spirit hovered over the waters of  
the deep at the Creation of the world.

In all those ways, the Holy Spirit breathed in you, as surely  
as the Spirit spoke through the prophets.

In all those ways, the Holy Spirit illumined your mind and  
your heart, just as surely as the Spirit reminded the first disciples  
of all that Jesus had said and taught.

If Pentecost is just about something that happened 2000  
years ago to somebody else, if Pentecost is just about repeating  
pious slogans or quoting canonized scripture verses, then our  
celebration today will be lifeless and sterile.

And for too many Catholics, the Holy Spirit is the forgotten  
and unappreciated person of the Trinity, with an “amen” tacked  
on to the name.

But Pentecost declares that God is a community of persons  
intimately involved with us and with every aspect of our lives,  
drawing us into that divine Triune life.

The Spirit teaches us to say, “Abba, Father” and “Jesus is  
Lord.”

The Spirit makes our lives into sacraments, so that our love and faith and service, our sharing and prayer, worship and witness, make visible and tangible the love of God in our world.

Pentecost was a far more earth-shaking event than Christmas. At Christmas, God becomes a human. But in Pentecost, all humanity is divinized, caught up in the very life of God.

In a perpetual Pentecost, God writes his Law and Covenant, no longer on tablets of stone, but on hearts of flesh, so that our lives begin to make visible and incarnate that divine love for us.

The Holy Spirit not only convinces us that God loves us. That same Spirit also empowers us to love one another, and to share that love in such ways that even strangers and enemies recognize the presence of God at work.

Don't take my word for it. Walk through your day, your life history, asking the Holy Spirit to illumine for you all the ways the Lord enfolded you in peace, enlightened you with wisdom, strengthened you with courage, moved you to compassion or repentance or forgiveness. For each instance has been your own participation in the Feast of Pentecost.

We profess our firm faith that God's Spirit is at play here in our midst, lifting us up, setting us ablaze, healing us and sending us out to the world, as we gradually become what we receive in this Eucharist, the one Body of Christ.

Just as our God is a community of Persons, yet the One Holy and Ever-living God, we too, though many, are becoming one, a community of holy persons who are one in the Spirit of Christ.

This is our Pentecost faith.

And the people of God said, Amen.