

**The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa**

Pentecost, May 27, 2007

Acts 2:1-11

I Corinthians 12:4-13

John 20:19-23

Gracious God, Help me to preach in a way that is good news to the poor, the weak, the widowed, the orphaned and those who are most vulnerable. Help me to preach in a way that honors and respects those who will suffer and die today for your Gospel. Help me to preach in a way that seeks not my glory but yours, not the growth of this church, but the spread of your kingdom. Amen

Sometimes I laugh when I think about the interview questions that were asked before I came here to St. Andrews. One question that I remember well was about my use of incense. “Do you like to use incense as part of the Sunday liturgy?” “Well”, I said, “I really don’t care all that much about using incense in the liturgy, a couple times a year at most...but, I really like to use a lot of water in the liturgy. I love using water, lots of water, at Baptisms, and at Easter.”

Sometimes, as you know, I have used too much water. There have been times when I have used my little whisk and gotten too close to the organ, or when I have used too much water as I have doused Cindy. And the time I will never forget was when the Bishop was here for confirmation and I thoroughly drenched him. Unfortunately he has never forgotten either. To make up for this, I bought the Bishop a little whisk of his own to use.

I do love to play with water. But, I have to confess, something that I did not tell the search committee is that I also love to play with fire. I love the candles at Christmas time and I love lighting the fire at the Easter Vigil. Most of all, I love the fire of Pentecost.

Fire is different than water. People usually smile when you douse them with water. Fire -- too much fire, makes people nervous. Fire too easily spreads out of control.

Fire is the symbol for the coming of the Holy Spirit because, like fire, too much of the Holy Spirit makes us nervous. Too much of the Holy Spirit just might spread out of control. And, little in life, and especially in the Church, makes us as nervous as being out of control.

It has long been a custom in the Church to extinguish the Easter Candle on the Feast of the Ascension. This symbolizes that the risen Jesus, is no longer present in his body on this earth.

It really is a shame that we do not have a do not have the custom of lighting a Pentecost Candle, a candle that can burn in the Church during the many weeks that stretch through the summer and fall months that take us through the remainder of the liturgical year through Advent. A Pentecost Candle would remind us throughout the season of Pentecost that the time of Jesus, the time after the Ascension is the time of the Holy Spirit.

Just for today in the center of the Church is a Pentecost Candle. Also, in the basket next to it and in your pews are candles that will be yours to take home. When you take it home, I invite you to put someplace where you can see it regularly; someplace where it can be a reminder to you of the Spirit of Christ who came at Pentecost, as a reminder of the Spirit who came upon you at your baptism. When this Pentecost Spirit came upon you at your baptism she came with gifts. These gifts are many:

- Through the Spirit, the Church is given the power to proclaim the Gospel.
- The Spirit gives the Church power to make Christ present in its preaching, in its celebration of the Sacrament.

- The Spirit gives the Church power to make Christ present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

The Scriptures speak of other gifts as well. The Gospel this morning speaks of a Spirit of Forgiveness. Elsewhere in scripture are mentioned the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding, Courage, Reverence and Wonder. Throughout the letters of Paul he mentions the gifts of Faith, and Healing, Prophecy, Miracles, Discernment and Tongues, Love and Joy, Peace and Patience, Tenderness, Kindness, Generosity. These gifts were given for the common good. These gifts were given so that all people on earth, born of the one Creator, Redeemed by the One Christ, might be united through the power of the One Holy Spirit.

These are gifts that are poured out abundantly over the Church, over the People of God throughout the world. These are poured out among the people of God of every language, and nation.

But, in addition to these gifts churches are given gifts as well. Here at St. Andrew's the Spirit has poured upon us the gifts of hospitality, and the gifts of service. We have been blessed with gifts that inspire worship, gifts that enable us to be a refuge for those in need of healing. We have been blessed with a spirit of openness and wonder as we seek to discover where the Spirit of God might be leading us. As individuals, baptized in the Spirit, each one of us, each one of you is given as well gifts that are uniquely yours. These gifts are also given for the common good, given to bring unity to creation. These gifts may be found in those things you love to do, in those talents that you have, in the passions that inspire and move your hearts.

- For some it may be a passion for writing, painting or for making music;
- for another, the passion to teach or to listen;
- a passion for hospitality; a passion to cook;
- a passion to fix, to explore, to plan.
- It may be the passion to plant and grow;
- a passion for charity and justice;
- a passion to care for the sick or the needy, to visit the lonely;
- a passion for the earth itself.

For the next few minutes I would like to ask you to turn to those around you. As you speak with them and tell them about a gift that you believe the Holy Spirit has given you. Share with them how you use that gift. Then, I would like you to share with them a special gift of the Spirit that you wish the spirit would enliven in you over the coming year. Maybe it's a something you would like to accomplish, some talent or virtue that you might want to work on and develop over the coming year. As you are talking I am going to be taking the light from the Pentecost candle to light the candles in the center aisle.

I would like us to begin to share the fire of the Spirit as you light the candle of those around you. As you light the candle of someone next to you, share with them a gift of the spirit that you most desire for the coming year. As you light the candles of those near you, promise as well to pray for them in the weeks and months to come that the Spirit will enliven that gift in them.