

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
May 31, 2020 - Pentecost Sunday (A)
Given at St. Mark's Church, Bridgewater, CT

Acts 2: 1-21; Psalm 104: 25-35,37; 1 Cor 12: 3b-13; John 20: 19-23

† **“I will pour out my Spirit upon every kind of people:
your sons and daughters will prophesy; and your young men shall see visions
and your old men shall dream dreams...”**

Happy Birthday! I love Pentecost- the celebration of the power of the Spirit here among us! Peter's quote from the prophet Joel says: “and your young men shall see visions,” is dear to my heart... It's the title of a book my mother gave to me when I was a teenager. Written by the Roman priest and sociologist, Andrew Greeley—who's known for his many trashy novels, but also for some beautiful works like this one—its a series of letters to a young man, challenging him to follow the Spirit and pursue Christian virtue. It says a lot about discernment and ministry. That one line, “and your young men shall see visions” haunted me for most of my life... It haunted me until I finally accepted a call I had avoided most of my life, to become a priest. It speaks to me of the tremendous power of the Spirit to affect our lives, to transform our lives, to lead us to be the people we are meant to be. There is no doubt that the Spirit leads us all to where we are supposed to be... its how I have been blessed to be here now with all of you in at St. Mark's in Bridgewater, and all of us are blessed to be with each other, so many of us, virtually wherever we are. Today, we celebrate that 'pouring out' of God's Spirit. Pentecost is the liturgical celebration of the coming of the 3rd Person of the Holy Trinity to humanity... to give strength and support to the disciples... to the Church. For a moment, consider the story historically... think about the coming of the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth. It happened at a pivotal moment, in a community on the threshold... This early community was threatened by the unexpected death of its leader, challenged by the stories and rumors of his resurrection... there was confusion about who was in charge, and what was going to happen. Sound familiar? ... And the story claims— we heard it today— that the Holy Spirit came... and the community was transformed. Similar to those the ancient tales of the Phoenix... a new community was born out of the ashes of despair, through flames of fire; it was transformed, it was reborn. It experienced new birth in the Spirit. Hence, today is considered the birthday of the Church.

The Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, came at a time when Jesus was no longer humanly present to his disciples, to give them peace... to give us peace. The Spirit came to teach us how to find God present in the midst of our daily lives, to see the world as Jesus taught us to see it. The Spirit of Truth speaks to our hearts; it penetrates our being and somehow allows us to know we are never alone. God loves each of us so much that the Holy Spirit was sent into our lives to guide us, to

transform us, and to calm us... telling us that God will always be present to us. How awesome! The Spirit came for us and is with us, and therefore, none of us is alone.

Long ago, I learned a simple prayer to start each day (taught to me by an 8 year old, who was the son of a member of a prayer class I was teaching):

“ Dear God, help me to remember,
nothing can happen to me today
that you and I can’t handle together.”

It still gets me...

It’s so important to remember this prayer, in the midst of the turmoil we face in this world, the Holy Spirit is here... right now!

It’s so vital to understand this, during the struggle, confusion, and sense of inequality many of us see in the world, the lives lost of so many, whether due to COVID 19 or other causes, the loss of loved ones... and the recurring debates on COVID 19 policy and politics, and the racism and nationalism that prevails all around us... and the divisions and violence occurring now in our nation.

And it’s so necessary to acknowledge God’s presence as we experience change and uncertainty as a result of the transitions occurring within our society and work places and within our parish and even the worldwide Church! Remember the prayer... nothing can happen that the Spirit and we, the Church, cannot handle together.

We are so loved by God, so precious to God, that God never left us...

The Spirit was sent so that we would never be alone. I find that humbling, comforting, and also empowering. As we begin new ventures and face the new challenges of becoming a new type of parish/ worshiping community in this missional age and in the age of COVID 19, we are assured... nothing will happen that the Spirit and we can’t handle together. Our God has promised, “I will pour out my spirit upon every kind of people...”

That’s the miracle of Pentecost:

Nothing can happen to me, that the Spirit and I cannot handle together...

Nothing can happen to you, that the Spirit and you cannot handle together... and,

Nothing can happen to us, that the Spirit and we cannot handle together!

AMEN †