

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17

Romans 8:14-17

“O Lord, when you hide your breath, we die.
Send forth your Spirit and create us and
renew the face of the earth.” AMEN!

(Sing)

“Yes, we’re going to a party, party (2X)

I would like you to dance, birthday
Take a cha-cha-cha-chance, birthday

I would like you to dance, birthday
Woo, dance! Dance!

They say it’s your birthday
Well, it’s my birthday too, yeah

They say it’s your birthday
We’re gonna have a good time

I’m glad it’s your birthday
Happy Birthday to you” :-)

Ah yes, Pentecost and the birthday of
the Church under Jesus Christ and
empowered by the Spirit.

That song “Happy Birthday” by the Beatles
reminds us that the church is considered
to be born on the day of Pentecost and

it can be a good image.

But we risk remembering the event with nostalgia
when we think the Spirit moved long ago,
and thus ignore the ways the Spirit
still happens and moves us today.

With the celebration of Pentecost we find,
“It’s our birthday too, yeah!”

When I think of birthdays, I think of babies,
I mean the day of birth when we are actually
in our “birthday suits.”

It was likely a very traumatic event,
for both baby and mother. (Pause)

Most of us know the Footprints in the Sand poem:

“One night I had a dream...

I dreamed I was walking along
the beach with the Lord, and across the sky
flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene I noticed two sets of footprints in
the sand: one belonged to me and the other
to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before us,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that many times along the path of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.

I also noticed that those times were
the very lowest and saddest times in my life.”

This troubled the person because they perceived
that in the hardest parts of life were the times
when the Lord left.

To this Jesus replied, “My child. I love you,
and would never leave you during the times of
trial and suffering.

When you see only one set of footprints,
it was then that I carried you.”

It’s a beautiful poem, but some of us may not
know the lost sections of the poem.

One section was when the poet looked back and
saw a scattered shells and deep ruts in the sand.

The beach looked like an awful mess.

What happened there the poet asked.

The Lord replied, “ Those were the times that
you were called to do the right thing,
even though it was hard or

even dangerous sometimes.

That's where I dragged you kicking and screaming!" :-)

Then they looked upon another set of footprints.

That scene includes circular patterns of footprints
that were organized and circular,
not following a straight line at all.

"What about those? What happened there?"
The Lord replied,

"Those were the times in your life
when we danced." (Pause)

The message in the poem can pertain to
the work of the Holy Spirit, too.

When things become difficult or even tragic
in our lives the Spirit does what we need
to get us through the times.

In times of joy and peace, the Spirit
dances with us (and others).

Indeed, the Spirit is a carrying wind,
a gentle reminder of God's presence,
amidst our kicking and screaming when
we are pushed pulled and dragged by God,
as well as those times

when we danced.

We like to hear the Spirit is gentle and calm,
but it's also a dangerous in-breaking of God
bursting into our world, community, and lives.

A Spirit that often drives us out, kicking and screaming.
(Pause)

The Spirit is the only way to explain
the transformation we witness in the disciples.

Once a bumbling group who fled from Jesus during
the worst times and hid away from strangers
when they feared for their own lives.

The seemingly fickle followers who couldn't even
stay awake to pray suddenly (it seems)
became fearless, energetic and alert.

They became public speakers and healers who
practiced civil disobedience and sometimes
found themselves incarcerated because
they obeyed Jesus' teachings and

were driven to complete those teachings
by the work of the Holy Spirit,
but it was a journey for them, wasn't it?

It was NOT really suddenly at all, but a long journey.

What we need to recognize is that it began
when they prayed, and I can imagine that
at least some of them prayed for God
to tell them what it was they were
waiting for.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come to them.

Fall upon them.

Would it hurt?

Baptized by fire doesn't sound pain-free,
and having the world hate me doesn't
sound particularly affirming.

It sounds downright dangerous!

Perhaps we should keep some
buckets of water nearby,
I'd have suggested. (Pause)

Seriously, the Book of Acts is quickly becoming
my favorite book in the Bible.

One of the things I love about it is that, in Acts,
no one is stuck, forever.

In this text there are stories of nurturing
community and the finding of purpose.

In Acts we find that each of us have a journey,
a way, with the Lord.

A journey that includes openness and opportunity
also gives realizations of failure failure and shame.

Peter saw the worst in himself in denying Jesus.

None of the disciples were there at the cross,
I should say, none of the male disciples
except the unnamed one in John:
the disciple whom Jesus loved and Mary
the mother of Jesus with other
women Jesus followers.

But all the others abandoned Jesus.

Yet, here's the thing, Jesus never let Peter and
the others go.

It was all necessary as part of their journey,
and their life was the mission. (Pause)

I've told the story of meeting Colleen here in
Tallahassee when we were at FSU.

Just because there was a spark when we met
doesn't mean that our relationship was
always "happily ever after."

Yet, it occurred to me that we'd have never met

if our mutual friends hadn't introduced us.

I know, you never say never, but it's that way with Jesus.

We would never know Jesus without the Holy Spirit
and that's cause for celebration today!

Pentecost is the fulfillment of the Paschal Mystery
because the fullness of God is revealed in
the Holy Spirit tangibly delivered at Pentecost.
(Pause)

Each life is a mission: there's work, leisure, prayer.

In varieties of order AND our mission is
to maintain an openness to receive God.

It heartens us back to when Peter
recognized Jesus on the beach.

So excited to be in His presence Peter dove into
the water to express his love three times.

It also heartens us back to the day when
they were "all together in one place."

The words at the start of our Acts reading today.

See, together is home.

The assembly is where I stay because

God's there, along with others on the journey,
who are there.

We have accompaniment and accountability here.

The ecclesia (church/assembly) is where
we are reminded and changed.

But it's not just any ol' change,
a transformation occurs... a change for the better.

AMEN!