

Pentecost

May 28, 2023

St. Patrick

It was the evening of that first Easter Sunday. The doors were locked. The Risen Jesus appeared for the first time to his disciples—ah, yes, to those who had abandoned him in his greatest crisis.

He didn't give them a stink eye, or an evil eye. **“Shalom!”... “Peace!”** was Jesus' Easter greeting.

It's the same to us *this* Pentecost, St. Patrick's! Jesus again says to us, as he did that first Easter night to those first disciples, **“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”** Once again, Jesus breathes over *us*, and then tells us, **“Receive the Holy Spirit!”**

It was some five years ago. A couple of parishioners, no more than a handful, felt moved to form a parish St. Vincent de Paul group. I didn't think it a good idea. We had our outreach ministry well established. The Holy Spirit was moving through that handful of folks. Our St. Vincent de Paul group thrives.

As the COVID plague closed things down three years ago, a couple of parishioners thought of starting a Mobile Food Bank here at St. Patrick's. They took the lead. As a result, we've had 26 Mobile Food Pantries, feeding 40,000 people with a week worth of groceries. The Pentecost Spirit was leading those couple of parishioners. As so much outreach ministry had slowed down, this Mobile Food Pantry keeps ministering in Jesus' name.

A couple of parishioners took the initiative to start up a Tanzania Health Clinic ministry here at St. Patrick's. Saying nothing, I didn't think it would make it. Instead, that ministry has blossomed, and many parishioners serve to make its presence felt—here, as well as in that Tanzania clinic. The Holy Spirit worked through those two parishioners.

At one point, an important decision needed to be made for the future of the parish. I chose three parishioners—all women of insight—to join me in the discernment. We spent many hours—in prayer and in listening. When we came to our conclusion, it was three to one—the three women in unanimity about which direction to take; I, a different direction. I said we would follow my decision. Then, one of the women, speaking for the group, questioned why they were asked

to participate if their joint discernment wasn't taken earnestly. And, you know, she was right. The group then followed the direction of the three women, and time has shown them truly Spirit-led in that crucial decision.

Ah, the Spirit has erupted in varied ways in our parish life. I am very grateful to God that in my 49 years of ordained ministry, in the home stretch, the Risen Jesus planted me here at St. Patrick's. You've given me lessons on how the Holy Spirit shows daring creativity in a sundry slice of the church.

Pentecost is Jesus' feast, and it's also *our* feast day, *our* birthday! And, Friends, Pentecost is never neat. In our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Margaret proclaimed that Pentecost miracle and about three thousand were baptized by the apostles. But all those folks were of Jewish heritage. That first Pentecost in Jerusalem, if a Gentile of pagan background sauntered up and wanted to be added to the church—oh, the usher would firmly lead that pagan in the direction of Jerusalem's Beale Street. Fifteen years later, however, that upstart Apostle Paul started baptizing Gentiles! The bold Spirit led the church in a fresh, new direction, and it unsettled the orthodox mainstream.

Yes, Pentecost is never neat. It unsettles the status quo.

I am so grateful that, over these six years, we've celebrated the Eucharist together. I'm especially thankful that we celebrate *this* Pentecost, all of us together. I want to say it clearly: I love you. We can celebrate this Eucharist with joy and with a keen hope for the future. Last week a parishioner sent me a gift—a T-shirt which I'll be wearing for our picnic. It says this, quoting our Pope Francis, **“Ask Jesus what He wants, and be brave.”**

St. Patrick's: Together, may we ask Jesus what He wants of us this Pentecost! And together let us shout out, **“Come, Holy Spirit!”**