

Acts 2:1-13

Today is the Feast of Pentecost, that day when the Holy Spirit descended upon a group of people, “Jews from every nation under heaven,” and made them church. The Biblical text tells us the gathered faithful heard a sound like the wind. To them, the heavens opened and there was a voice. Then they spoke. They preached. They testified to the great good that God was doing among them. Jesus sent them his Holy Spirit, down from his throne in heaven. And they in turn sent up their prayers to him. The crowd in the street scoffed, saying, “They’re drunk!” The mob couldn’t imagine God Almighty speaking to a bunch of ignorant and unlearned people.

To try to preach a homily on such an uncontrollable, overwhelming phenomenon like the Holy Spirit is really silly; at our staff retreat the other day, each of us shared the movement of God in our life- and it was a marvel to hear the many and diverse ways God has touched and changed people forever-that’s the Holy Spirit; if I asked you to give me an adjective describing the Holy Spirit what would be the word you would choose? What is the way the Holy Spirit has impacted your life? Here are some words that come to my mind: presence, power, understanding, clarity, connection, power, joy, restoration, new creation, comfort, peace, love; the reception of gifts like these form our prayers for those about to be baptized.

So, I suppose one could say that the first gift of Pentecost is the gift of a God who speaks. If the Bible’s testimony is as true as we believe it to be, then our God is a relentlessly, unceasingly self-communicative God. There is something about this God that loves to address humanity- every single person. Call it loquaciousness or call it love. A British poet called it the hound of heaven.

One sure sign that two people are in love is that they long always to be with one another. More than that, they want to talk with one another-the telephone, email, cell phone, whatever. The talk is important because our speech is our primary way of expressing ourselves, of sharing ourselves, giving to and receiving from others.

Our God seems to be that way with us. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends, just as the risen Christ had promised. Every Sunday when we gather for worship, we gather under this promise: our God speaks. God also speaks to us in our prayer, through the Holy Scriptures, in the midst of the

conversation of the Church, in the bread and the wine, in the love of husband and wife, through the mouths of babes. God searches out the lost, the lonely, those who suffer, those persons who are dying. I know some complain that God doesn't speak to them but honestly one has to wonder if they are listening.

And because God loves us enough to speak to us, we can speak to God. Isn't that incredible, you and I can converse with the creator of the universe. On that level it sounds somewhat daunting. I mean what do you say? I remember when I was in junior high school. I wanted to ask a young lady in my class to go out on a date. I was so nervous I wrote out every word I wanted to say, before I dared pick up the phone! It is difficult to find the right words to speak with God because it is hard to reveal ourselves, to say what we want to say and how we want to say it.

But God takes care of that problem too. St. Paul tells us in the eighth chapter of Romans that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, finds the words that we want to speak to God. Isn't that wonderful? The Holy Spirit is not only the way that God speaks to us, reveals himself to us, but also the way that we are enabled to speak to God. The Holy Spirit is that power, that gift from God that enables us to be in loving conversation with God.

If I ever find the right words to say something to your heart in a sermon, it's not because I went to a good seminary-although I did. It's because God gave me the words. And you. If you ever hear anything in a sermon, despite all of the perfectly good reasons why you might not, it's because God gave you the hearing.

Christianity is a "revealed religion," which is a fancy way of saying that you don't "get it," it gets you. You can't even think about Jesus, he has to be given to you. It must come from on "high."

Today, Pentecost, is the day when we gather to celebrate that relationship, to give thanks to God for being so communicative, so talkative, so lovingly, self-revealingly conversational. It's the day we give thanks for the Spirit moving in and through our lives that give us the words to praise God as we ought, to speak to God in words and music that are more beautiful than we ourselves could devise. This conversational relationship made possible by the Holy Spirit-it is what forms the Church and as we saw in the lives of those who received it on the day of Pentecost-changes the world. Amen.