

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

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[<<Previous Meditations](#)

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SEND FORTH YOUR SPIRIT

Pentecost is a day of completion. What had been foretold by John the Baptist now actually happens. John had declared, " I baptize you in water, but there is one to come...He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire" (Lk 3: 16). The Risen Jesus assured His disciples, "I send down upon you the promise of My Father. Remain here in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24: 49). That promise is about to be fulfilled.

Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, was of special significance to the Jews. It was associated with thanksgiving for the first harvest. It also looked back to the covenant God had established with the Chosen People. It is fifty days after Passover and followers of Jesus are "gathered in one place." We join them and share their sense of expectation. Who could have foreseen the experience about to take place? They are suddenly aroused by the sound of a strong driving wind, so loud that it can be heard all through the house. Then their eyes are astonished to see parted tongues of fire resting upon each of them. We are more than spectators of this scene. For the wind and the fire have come into our hearts to cleanse them and to enkindle them with the same power that took hold of those first Christians. We are present at the birth of the Church. "See I am doing something new! Now it springs forth" (Is 43:19). The wonder of that day is not simply an historical event that we commemorate. We are caught up in all that transpired and we continue the mission then assigned.

Christ has risen; now the power of His redemption is communicated through the Spirit—at first to a very small group of people. The seed is planted and it will grow. The crowd outside the upper room, "devout Jews of every nation," heard the sound of the rushing wind and immediately afterwards of Christ's followers speaking in tongues. "They were dumbfounded and could make nothing of all that had happened. 'What does this mean?' they asked" (Acts 2:5,12).

What does this mean? A question which continues until time is no more. We are always seekers, invited to penetrate more deeply the meaning of God's gift in the Holy Spirit. We move into depths of understanding that reveal how much still remains to be plumbed.

"All who are led by the spirit of God are sons and daughters of God...The Spirit gives witness with our spirit that we are children of God. But if we are children, we are heirs also, heirs of God, heirs with Christ"(Ro 8: 14,16,17). Faith tells us we share in "a glorious freedom" (21) that leads us out of slavery into the promised land where whatever happens we are accompanied by One Who is all powerful and loves us. Love and power meet in the Person of the Holy Spirit, ever present to us.

We can have no doubt of that for Christ's words are our guarantee. "I will ask the Father and you will be given another Paraclete to be with you always, the Spirit of

Truth" (Jn 14:16,17). Paraclete comes from the Greek *Parakletos* which can signify a legal advocate, someone who mediates, who comes to help, to be supportive. A paraclete is a comforter in the double sense of strengthening and consoling. In departing from His disciples, Jesus assured them He was not leaving them orphans.

Those who are enriched by a legacy have to understand what is being allotted to them. If they are ignorant of the assets conveyed, then how do they use them? St. Teresa of Avila asks: "How can he spend who does not know that he is rich?" Such legatees might as well be penniless. Jesus can be likened to a modern broker who sets up our account, but with Jesus, there is no fee and never any losses. "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send in My name, will instruct you in everything and remind you of all I told you" (Jn 14:26). We have an Advisor Whose suggestions are delivered gently and yet with a force so strong that we pay attention to them. We need reminders and the Spirit speaks to us in tones that sometimes admonish and sometimes affirm our actions, always urging us to deeper commitment to Christ. Fire and winds cleanse our inner consciousness, ridding us of useless thoughts and desires. At times the flames warm our innermost being and a gentle breeze makes the embers rise to enkindle greater love.

Communicating with our Advocate is much simpler and swifter than e-mail. Just the movement of the heart, the reaching out for help connects with One Who dwells within our very being--Who awaits this turning in order to embrace us with strengthening and fresh understanding of what takes place in our lives. In the Spirit we have a sure guide leading us out of perplexity and fear, telling us our pain is only for a while, that it gains for us an eternal weight of glory. Our guide unveils the significance of what occurs, showing us the gift of grace hidden in every occurrence. We are drawn to make choices that will lead us away from evil; we are empowered to choose the good, the truth.

Where there is joy, the Spirit intensifies the delight and links it to the everlasting joy awaiting us. Where there is grief, we are given solace to help the bitterness of tears change into a watering that brings acceptance and a deep-down peace. "We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue and tested virtue for hope." This is not a struggle we have to wrestle with all on our own. "This hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us" (Ro 5:3-5).

The primary work of the Spirit is to transform us in Christ. Jesus' life is to penetrate ours. The Carmelite Bl. Elizabeth of Dijon wrote to her married sister, a busy mother of children, "Surrender yourself to the Holy Spirit so the Spirit can transform you in God and imprint on your soul the image of divine beauty, that the Father bending over you lovingly will see only His Christ" (Letter 239).

Like the apostles after Pentecost, we are anointed through our baptism and inflamed by the Spirit to make Christ better known, to rejoice inwardly in our calling as we reach out to others. The fire of Pentecost burns in our hearts. Through us, the Spirit breathes forth something of the wonders of divine love overflowing the human race. **"Walk worthy of the vocation to which you are summoned. Each of us has received God's favor in the measure in which Christ bestows it"** (Eph 4:1,7). We who have so much, let us be generous with the treasure which is our legacy, for the more spendthrift we are, the more we are given.

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