

The Last Sunday of Pentecost – November 24, 2024

The title “Last Sunday of Pentecost” is misleading, isn’t it? It might be the last Sunday in a Church season. But it’s certainly not a last Sunday in the Christian experience.

Today, Pentecost, is about empowerment. The Holy Spirit has arrived to put us to work. The Good News of the Resurrection is not “one and done.” Rather it’s a “kick in the pants” to get us going, to get us to share, to underscore our belief that we’re not “one and done” people. No, we are not “done” people. We are “saved” people. With an expectation to share our joy.

Now, along with sharing our joy, we share our conviction that God the Holy Spirit will lift us up when we are down, give us courage when we are afraid, and strengthen our faith when our spirit weakens.

The Season of Pentecost is a reminder Season. A time to remember how we can share our Good News, our Great News, our Welcome News. The Risen Christ expects us to get to work. And here we are. Think of today as half-time when Coach Jesus reminds us of our potential for the second half.

And not just of our potential, but of God’s promise. We are saved people. Oh yes, we are tired people. We are uncertain people some of the time. But we are not limited by our uncertainty. No, we are grateful for the certainty of the Resurrection. We are active. We take our role as God’s helper seriously.

Bumps in the road? You bet. Grateful for the sufficient love to save us? Absolutely. Thank you Jesus, for what the today’s opening hymn describes as “kindling a flame of sacred love.”

Do we think of ourselves as “kindlers,” as those “lighting a fire”? Maybe some of time, but probably not all of the time. That’s our nature, isn’t it? Up some of the time, and down some of the time. And, at many other times, somewhere in between.

But guess what. God loves “between-ers.” And we have a sense of that. It’s why we gather. It’s why we don’t rely just on ourselves. Rather we seek the company

of the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we seek the company of one another. We are receivers some of the time – thank you, Lord – and we are givers some of the time – again, thank you, Lord.

It's hard to imagine what life would be like without a sense of receiving and without a sense of giving.

But guess what, we don't give in to the "without." Rather, we practice the "with." And, more to the point, the "with" is not narrow. It is huge. Plenty of room to receive God's love and plenty of room to share that love.

This confidence is evident in today's passage from the Book of Daniel. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed."

God is with us for the long haul. From birth to life and to what is beyond this life. That's our faith. It's why we're here. It's why we love to share our positive and joyful experiences. From our opening hymn today: "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, with all thy quickening powers."

For you and me and centuries of others, the Holy Spirit did come, has come, and will come. Indeed the Holy Spirit is not time bound. It is contemporary. It is ever present. Sometimes the Spirit waits for us to respond. And other times the Spirit takes the initiative and intervenes. Whatever the timing, the Holy Spirit is at work in you and me. Even when we dismiss the Spirit or ignore the Spirit or get mad at the Spirit, the Spirit is with us.

Sometimes we recognize the Spirit. We pray for the Spirit, we pray to the Spirit, and we pray that we can make a home for the Spirit. In fact, the Spirit is already in the house. We don't have to schedule a visit. We simply have to recognize the presence. Can you imagine a life without this relationship?

Yes, we probably can so imagine. But if we are honest with ourselves, it's not the Spirit who forgets us, but it is we who forget or ignore or get angry. Yes, we get angry with God. "Where were you when I needed you?" "Why didn't you intervene on my behalf?" "Why didn't you save me?"

Hopefully our anger or disappointment is short-lived. And when we do get over our anger or disappointment, what do we do? We promise to do better. We promise hear better and we promise to act better. And to share better.

Yes, to share better. The presence of the Holy Spirit is not something to hoard. No, God expects us to share the experience. And when we do that, we feel pretty good, don't we? We have a sense that we are where we are meant to be. With the Risen Christ, and on behalf of the Risen Christ.

Now, it is true that living with the Risen Christ and on behalf of the Risen Christ is not everyone's cup of tea. It might not have been our cup of tea. But, guess what, when we decided to give God another chance, God said "Welcome home." Today's Gospel passage ends with "everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

The key here is to keep listening. That's what we do here. That's what we do when we are alone. Oh yes, we do a lot of talking, but we also do a lot of listening. That "still small voice" is special. We can't define it, but we can receive it. We should never under-estimate our ability to hear God speaking to us, and our ability to act on what we hear.

And when we do act on what we hear, guess what. We want to listen more and do more. And, in this listening and doing, we find great satisfaction. Just what God intended. His way of saying "Welcome home." And our way of saying "It's good to be home."

Amen.