

Friday (Evelyn Underhill)

From the first to the last, the emphasis is to be on God and not on ourselves. Admiring delight, not cadging demands. Faithful and childlike dependence – a clinging to the Invisible, as the most real of all realities, in all the vicissitudes of life – not mere self-expression and self-fulfilment. Disinterested collaboration in the Whole, in God's vast plan and purpose, not concentration on our own small affairs. Three kinds of generosity. Three kinds of self-forgetfulness. A confident reliance on the immense fact of His Presence, everywhere and at all times, pressing on the soul and the world by all sorts of paths and in all sorts of ways, pouring out on it His undivided love, and demanding undivided loyalty. We stand in a world completely penetrated by the living God. We are citizens of that world now; and our whole life is or should be and acknowledgement of this.

Scripture (Ephesians 4:2-7)

With all humility and gentleness and with patience, support each other in love. Take care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one body, one Spirit just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all and within all. On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it.

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Pentecost

It will always be Pentecost in the Church if...

Luke, (Acts 2:1-11) and John, (20:19-23), both write about the followers of Jesus being filled with the Spirit. The significant differences between their accounts mean you can't be certain of what happened, (John's happens on Easter Sunday with Jesus present, whilst Luke's happens fifty days later with a violent wind from heaven and tongues of fire), but the details explain why it happened, and where it fit into God's plan. In John's account, the disciples, (the 11 plus women and possibly other friends) are locked in a room, terrified and defeated, worried about their safety and no doubt thinking 'if we get away, what's the point? It's all over.' When Jesus appears in the room, showing his wounds is more than just identification marks. In still carrying the the wounds, the risen Jesus is showing that what is happening now is a continuation of his life and death: his work continues. (Without the wounds it would have been a 'fresh start' with a 'we can put all that unpleasant stuff behind us.'). They are filled with the Spirit when Jesus breathes on them. This breath signifies the Spirit of God: it is what gave life to Adam, when God breathed into him, and when on the cross, right at the end, Jesus breathed his last and 'gave up his spirit', or 'handed over his spirit', the point when he was able to fully unite the Spirit he had been filled with at his baptism with the Father, because of his complete trust and obedience which allowed him to say 'it is accomplished.' In this union, he is able to give the Spirit of God to his followers. Filled with the Spirit they are told to go out and forgive (or retain) sins – something only God can do. In John's Gospel, the main sins are those of unbelief, (8:24, 9:41), so this forgiveness they bring seems to be saying that those who rejected Jesus are still welcome – the past is not a barrier as far as God is concerned. (This is immediately demonstrated with the 'Doubting Thomas', which follows immediately after this passage). Being sent into the world – the whole world – is also the theme of the more dramatic version in Acts 2:1-11, and is why Luke has this taking place on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, which was a harvest celebration that became linked with the gathering of the whole of Israel at Sinai for the giving of the Law. Luke's list of peoples shows that the whole of Israel was gathered in Jerusalem for the announcement of the New Covenant. Luke's description of the sound of a powerful wind from heaven and the flames also recalls the thunder and lightning that announced God's presence in the cloud at Sinai. As with John, the Spirit is not given for the disciples' own benefit, but so that they can continue the work of Jesus in establishing God's Kingdom, to which the whole world is invited.

By the time Paul writes his first Letter to the Corinthians, it is clear that what began in that room in Jerusalem has spread far and wide. He is concerned that the believers are using the Gifts of the Spirit only in worship, and focusing too much on the more dramatic gifts, as though they were a measure of a person's holiness, or using them to 'outdo' the ecstatic parts of pagan worship. He carefully explains how it is the Father, the Son and the Spirit working in believers, and uniting believers in one body. When we meet in our 'room' on Sunday, do we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us? When we wish each other 'peace', is it a vague good wish, or more 'may the peace of Christ disturb you', reminding each other that we are commissioned to go out, as members of the body of Christ, united to him by the Spirit. Martin Bennett

Monday (Cardinal Newman)

The condescension of the blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret presence of God within creation and the voice of truth in the hearts of all rational beings, tuning them into harmony with the intimation of God's law. He is especially called the "life giving" Spirit, being the inward light of the patriarchs and prophets, the grace abiding in the Christian soul, and Lord and ruler of the Church. Therefore, let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first source of all perfection, in and together with his co-equal Son and Spirit.

Scripture (Acts 2:1-8)

When Pentecost day came around, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind, which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves. Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. 'Surely', they said, 'All these men speaking are Galileans?'

Tuesday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

We, too, are being driven back to first principles. Atonement and redemption, regeneration, the Holy Spirit, the love of our enemies, the cross and resurrection, life in Christ and Christian discipleship—all these things have become so problematic and so remote that we hardly dare speak of them. The day will come when people will be called again to utter the word of God with such power as will change and renew the world. It will be a new language which will horrify people, and yet overwhelm them with its power.

Scripture (Isaiah 61:1-2)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, release to those in prison.

Wednesday (Fr. Richard Rohr)

When you no longer expect something from life, you are for all practical purposes an atheist. When you are no longer open to do something new, you might as well hang it up. The experience of the Spirit is an undeserved, unmerited becoming, a new whole greater than the sum of all the parts. It draws us out and beyond ourselves. It is radical grace. To walk in the Spirit is to allow yourself to be grabbed by God and taken into a much larger world of meaning.

Scripture (2 Timothy 1:6-7,13-14)

That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but the spirit of power and love and self-control. Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, look after that thing given in trust.

Thursday (St. Teresa of Avila)

The prayer of quiet, then, is a little spark of the true love of Himself, which our Lord begins to enkindle in the soul; and his will is that the soul should understand what this love is by the joy it brings. This spark given of God, however slight it may be, causes a great crackling; it is the beginning of a great fire, which sends forth the flames of the most vehement love of God. What the soul has to do is nothing more than to be gentle and without noise. By noise I mean striving with the understanding in search of words and reflections whereby to give thanks for his grace, and gathering up the sins and imperfections to show that it does not deserve it.

Scripture (Titus 3:4-7)

When the kindness and love of God our Saviour for mankind were revealed, it was not because of anything we had done ourselves; it was for no reason except his own faithful love that he saved us through the washing by which the Holy Spirit gives us new birth and new life. For God abundantly poured out the Holy Spirit on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that by his grace we might be made right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.