

**11am Homily on Pentecost Day
June 4, 2006
Baptism and Holy Eucharist**

READINGS

The Acts of the Apostles, 2:1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

The Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:4-13

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The Gospel: John 14: 8-17

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Today is Pentecost Day and we **celebrate gifts!** Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism, when by the symbol of water, Eric Jensen will be given new life as a disciple of Christ. He will be initiated into the mission and ministry of Christ's Church and as our newest member here at Epiphany.

Today we also celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit which have been given to each and every one of us! Are you aware that God has given you a unique and different **charism** – gift, and ability to be used to build up the body of Christ, - empowering you to act and to serve as Christ's representative here on earth.

And we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church in the story from Acts when a strong wind and tongues of fire descended on the disciples, giving them the gift of speech which in turn gave birth to the church.

Pentecost was the day that **changed** a fearsome, worried, and confused group of Jesus' followers **for the rest of their lives**. Gathered together in Jerusalem they needed assurance of the power that Jesus had promised to them since he was about to leave them. Suddenly, the commotion of rushing winds and the sight of tongues of fire! It's a day of mystery and miracles.

Before this event, the disciples were afraid, **now they are given the gift of courage**. Before they just didn't get it, and **now their minds are opened and they are given the gift of understanding**. Before they were mute and secluded, and **now they are given the gift proclamation** so that they are understood by people from every nation and culture as they witness to what Jesus Christ means to their lives.

But this is not to say that the disciples had an easy time of it. When the church went public, **they struggled**. All through this Easter season we have been reading the Book of Acts and the stories of the disciples' hardships – as they proclaimed Jesus Christ and what his dying and rising to life meant to their lives– they were put on trial and thrown in jail. They struggled to discern God's spirit and how they were being called to act. But it was **God's power in the Holy Spirit** dwelling in them on Pentecost Day that sent them out into the world to preach and teach and baptize. **Their conversion experience changed their lives forever** and gave them the strength and courage and eloquence to change thousands more lives.

Today when **Eric is baptized his life will also be changed forever**. Today Eric will symbolically enter into the waters of Christ's dying to be buried with him and raised to new life in him. (No, you don't have to be immersed, Eric!) In this ritual act that proclaims the gift of God's love for Eric, the Holy Spirit, will be poured out onto Eric, initiating him into the **one Body of Christ**. He, and others who we will welcome as new members, will be joining us as we support one another in the mission of Christ's Church here in downtown Washington.

And this is not a church of conformity and sameness that Eric is joining. Epiphany is a very diverse Episcopal Church. As Paul's letter to the Corinthians reminds us, the spiritual gifts that we have each been given and that we offer to the Church, are rich in diversity and interrelated to one another. And the Church needs our diversity. Like the parts of the body working together, one member cannot do it all, because together our gift complements and enrich one another's. This Church of Christ's is made up of members with gifts that are many, but **one thing is common to us all** – all our gifts are rooted in the same God, the same Lord Jesus, the same Holy Spirit. We experience this unity through our common baptism.

And so Eric is not being baptized all by himself. **We are the witnesses to this life changing event!** We promise that we will *“do all in our power to support Eric in his life in Christ.”* This is a serious commitment we are about to make. Are you ready to say those words and mean them? You and I are being called to use the power given to us at our baptisms so that we can nurture, support, and guide Eric in his new life! **Do you believe this?** It is a significant commitment.

How will we do it? One step at a time. We begin by offering the gift of hospitality and welcome - something Epiphany is very good at. But can we take that a step further as we get to know Eric and the other new members, we can help identify, discern the gifts they bring to this community, so they can use them to do the works that Jesus did. **And then we must invite our new members into ministry with us.**

Everyone of us is called to recognize this power of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. Jesus tells Peter in the gospel: “The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.” Yes, this is a responsibility that **each of us** has that flows from the sacrament of baptism. And, it is a responsibility that is nourished by the sacramental bread and the wine of Eucharist.

Today, let us consider how **our lives** are already changed forever as we remember that we too are filled with the Spirit. Let us imagine that the overflowing water of baptism continues to refresh our very souls and inspires us to listen to how God is calling each of us to use the gifts we have been given – and no one can deny that you have been given a gift. If you are in doubt, talk to someone about that this morning.

Jesus expects us to use the gifts of the spirit empowering us to continue the work he began. Paul lists some gifts that frankly sound pretty spectacular and ones we might be familiar with : gifts of prophecy, miracles, speaking in tongues and interpreting tongues. We just might be unaware and overlook other gifts that are as needed, but that are more everyday and ordinary. Gifts of compassion and mercy, humor, helping another without expecting a reward, gift of prayer, gift of generosity, gift of hospitality and faith. These are also ways that we know **God-in us** – practices of our lives that demonstrate that God dwells in us – that the Holy Spirit is the ground of our being.

How else is Epiphany going to move forward with the mission we are called to in downtown Washington?

How else can we minister with the poor at the Welcome Table breakfast on Sundays and at the noon time Street Church on Tuesdays?

How else can we discern the right and good thing to do about renovating this building?

How else can we make decisions about our financial giving to Epiphany?

How else can we spread the word and invite our friends and colleagues to join us here at Epiphany?

It all has to be discerned and acted on through the Spirit. God calls each and every one of us to serve in God's name by loving one another as God loves us.

Jesus did not leave his disciples comfortless when he went to be with the Father. Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit to be **GOD-WITH-US**. This Advocate, this Spirit of truth, this comforter, binds us to God in Christ, and binds us to one another with the same love that God has for us. And we know this love when we use the gifts of the Spirit for building God's kingdom here in Washington. Amen.