

Saint Matthew's/San Mateo Episcopal Church

Day of Pentecost, June 5, 2022

READINGS:

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:25-35, 37

Romans 8:14-17

John 14:8-17 (25-27)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wind and flame and UNDERSTANDING!

Have you sent your Pentecost cards?

I have – at least, electronic ones to our Saint Matthew's/San Mateo parish family!

Jesuit priest Dennis Hamm is responsible for this question. He contends that we Christians neglect to send greetings on Pentecost, though many of us send Christmas cards, and some even send Easter cards.

He argues that "Easter, celebrating the divine victory over the shame of death by crucifixion, finds its fuller meaning in the enlivening of the Christian community through the gift of the Holy Spirit." "The signs and wonders worked in Jesus' ministry by the power of the spirit," he says, "now continue in the ministry of the People of the Way." That would be us, I do believe!

We often celebrate the Day of Pentecost here at Saint Matthew's/San Mateo with a birthday party for the church. We have decorated with balloons, brought everyone from all our services together to celebrate in English and Spanish, had a birthday cake, and cooked burgers for patio picnics on our church grill, "Holy Smokes." Maybe we will be able to do that again, next year!

Pentecost helps awaken us to the wonderful communal dimension of our faith – a faith we share with about two BILLION people baptized in the name of Jesus around the world! All these disciples, beginning with those excited new converts who heard the original disciples

preaching, each in their own native language, on that first Pentecost! All those years, and all the many gifts, and the faithfulness!

I think Father Hamm is right – the marketplace may not be ready for Pentecost cards, but we Christians may well be. Pentecost is, after all, about God working with us. It points to our lives of faith now, as we respond to the news of the incarnation and of our salvation by using our diverse gifts in service, with the rest of Christ's body, in the world around us.

“O Lord,” sings the psalmist today, “how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures....These all look to you to give them their food in due season...When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth...I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.”

The Holy Spirit of God, who came to the church at its beginning in wind and flame and understanding, is working in us, and beside us, right now, to renew the face of the earth for God's kingdom! As disciples, we are sent into the world as that wind and flame and understanding – every day! Father Hamm is right - that is worth a Pentecost card, or two, or a dozen, or a billion or so!

We call the season following the Day of Pentecost the “long, green season.” The excitement of the Spirit's coming as wind and flame, and of hearing the message of the disciples in many languages, is bound to settle with time. We do not stay on the mountaintop all summer! Our church colors stay the same, pretty much week after week. In our parish, the next likely color change will be for Saint Matthew's Day toward the end of September. And after that celebration of our patron saint, we will “go green” again until we observe All Saints Sunday on November 6. That's a lot of green! And, it is a lot of days to live on our life journeys with the Lord.

“Very truly, I tell you,” says Jesus to his first disciples in our Gospel reading for today, “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.” What a challenge for us! The long, green season may be just long enough for us to make a tiny start on that assignment! We will have to stick with it, day by day.

Jesus points out that we will not be alone as we follow him on through Pentecost and back around to the beginning of another church year in Advent. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever...You know him, because he abides in

you, and he will be in you.” The Holy Spirit will be beside us and within us this long, green season and always. He will teach us everything, and remind us of all that Jesus has said to us.

Saint Paul reminds the early church in Rome, and us, gathered for worship today, that we were baptized into God’s family. As his children, we are led, he tells us, by the Spirit of God. And when we cry “Abba! Father!” the Spirit bears witness within us that we are God’s children. We don’t need to have Day of Pentecost excitement every day. What counts in the “long, green season” of our lives is being faithful, being obedient – sticking with it day by day! Life in the Spirit means, very simply, life under the lordship of Christ.

This year, I plan to keep today’s reading from Acts where I can easily find it – maybe in my prayer book, or even stuck to my refrigerator with a magnet. You might want to join me.

Once in a while, read the story. Imagine being part of the story. Father John Foley tells it this way: “You are gathered with the disciples in a house. Suddenly a huge noise, which is ‘like a strong driving wind,’ drowns everything out. Something resembling a flame appears and hovers in the air. It splits into many flame-like presences, which hover over each person in the room.” (The members of the gathered crowd) have at least 15 different languages among them. But they all understand. Picture yourself preaching or listening.” Then pray quietly.

In this long, green season of Pentecost 2022, remember that to each of us has been given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Pentecost is the season of God working with us. Through all those gifts the Spirit works to renew the face of the earth!

Wind and flame and UNDERSTANDING!

Happy Holy Spirit Sunday!

Enjoy your Pentecost card!

Amen.