



**Pentecost Sunday
June 12, 2011 A**

**CONNECTING TODAY'S READINGS
WITH OUR DAILY LIVES
THE SPIRIT AS A WILD GOOSE**

The following are three worthwhile reflections on today's readings by Alice Camille. I have added some reflection questions.

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

"We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

Something incredible happened at Pentecost. People who spoke quite differently heard the same message perfectly. That rarely happens nowadays, when we each listen to our own media outlets to hear the message tailored to our point of view. The way we "talk differently" now is less about language and more about political perspective. We can use the same words today—taxes, health care, immigration, rights—and hear radically different meanings encoded therein.

Is there a way we can learn to talk to each other instead of past each other—to hear what's said beyond the political distortions? Jesus promotes the language of love, which listens for the divine heartbeat beneath superficial distinctions between persons and groups. The Spirit's first language is unity.

Reflection questions:

- What makes it hard for me to listen to people whose views are different from mine?
- Do I engage in divisive talk—talk that divides our communities into 'us' and 'them'?

Second Reading: 1Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

"In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons."

In every age, it seems there are two kinds of people: the acceptable and the unacceptable, by any other name. In the time of St. Paul the acceptable were—from the perspective of his fellow citizens at least—Jews. Of course, ask a Greek-speaking Gentile member of the

early church who the acceptable were, and you'd get a different response. Drawing a line of acceptability across the assembly made both sides really miserable. The body of Christ cannot be divided by elements as arbitrary as language, ethnicity, culture, and background. Elsewhere, Paul adds gender to the list of things that must not separate us. It's sad to think that, twenty-one centuries later, these factors and more continue to keep sisters and brothers in Christ from experiencing the unity that is the Spirit's gift to us.

Reflection question:

- As I look out on the people in Brevard County and beyond, do I also tend to see some persons as acceptable and others as unacceptable? If so, why?

Gospel: John 20:19-23

"Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"

Another word for "unity" is "peace." As popes have been saying for generations, peace is more than the absence of war. You can't have peace without a concerted effort toward unity, which can only be had by working toward the common good. If we want a society that works, one that functions in harmony and good order, there has to be something in it for everyone. So long as groups are excluded from the common good, there can be no peace for anyone, since one side suffers oppression while the other must dominate. Our celebration of Pentecost reminds us that peace is the natural language of the church. Unity must be our intention, which cannot be had simply by whittling off dissenting voices. We must learn to speak to each other again, so that the common good is served.

Reflection questions:

- What have I done recently to break down barriers that exist between individuals or groups?
- When it comes to the divisiveness that exists in our society or church, do I tend to be a part of the problem or part of the solution?

The Spirit as a Wild Goose

In the scriptures, the Spirit is imaged as fire, wind, gentle breeze, dove, etc. While all these are attractive and great images of the Spirit, Fr. Bill Bausch, in his book *A World of Stories*, tells us that in ancient Celtic tradition, the Holy Spirit was not represented as a dove, peaceful and pure, but as a *wild goose!* Geese, says Bausch, are not controllable; they make a lot of noise with their honking and have a habit of biting those who try to contain them. They fly faster in a flock than on their own and they make excellent “guard dogs.” Building on the wild goose image of the Spirit, Patricia Sanchez writes:

Like the wild goose, the uncontainable Spirit of God demands a hearing. Its song is not always sweet and calming but is often strong, challenging and unnerving. The wild goose of Pentecost corrals people together and demands that they support and travel with one another. Those, upon whom this wild goose rests, are thereby often compelled to become noisy, passionate and courageous guardians of the gospel. Forget the quiet cooing of the dove. Pentecost's Spirit honks, commanding that we be attentive to the needs of the poor. “Honk!” shouts the Spirit of Pentecost when justice is denied, when dignity is damaged, when rights are deprived, when sin goes unchecked, when life is not preserved and respected. “Honk!” sounds the Spirit, demanding that the good news of Jesus' saving death and glorious resurrection is proclaimed to all without discrimination and without stinting. It was this same fiery, forceful, windy, honking Spirit that transformed the first disciples of Jesus and directed all their ministerial efforts. It was this same Spirit that enabled all, who heard them preach that day, to understand in their own language the marvels that God has accomplished.

As careful readers of Acts will remember, the “wild goose” of Pentecost was present at every juncture of the early church's development. For example, the Spirit gave the impetus that first thrust the followers of Jesus into the mission fields (1:8, 2:33). That same Spirit enlightened and enlarged the parochial attitude of Jews toward gentiles (10-11; 13:2, 4). Once gentiles had been admitted to church membership, it was the Spirit who helped to relieve them of the added burdens of Jewish cult and customs (15:28). When the body of believers in Jesus grew beyond the borders of Judea and Samaria and when leadership for the evolving church was needed, it was the Spirit who directed the community's choice of competent, worthy leaders (20:28).

Two Prayers to the Holy Spirit

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.
Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.
Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.

Amen.

St. Augustine

Breath of God

[The Holy Spirit is often referred to as the breath of God.]

Breathe on me, breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love the thing you love,
and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with you I have one will,
to live and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
my soul with grace refine,
until this earthly part of me
glows with your fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
do I shall never die,
but live with you the perfect life
in your eternity.

Midmorning Prayer from Liturgy of the Hours

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Aaron