

May 23, 2021
Pentecost
Understanding Others

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Preaching

First Reading ~ *Acts 2:1-21*

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room. Suddenly, they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages, as Spirit enabled them. Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being spoken. They were amazed and astonished: "Surely all of these people speaking are not Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome — all Jews, or converts to Judaism — Cretans and Arabs, too; we hear them preaching, each in our own language, about the marvels of God!" All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, "What does this mean?" But others said mockingly, "They've drunk too much new wine." Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd, "Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! These people are not drunk as you think — it's only nine o'clock in the morning! No, it's what Joel the prophet spoke of: 'In the days to come — Our God declares — I will pour out my Spirit on all humankind. Your children will prophesy, your young people will see visions, and your elders will dream dreams. Even on the least of these, both women and men, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. And I will display wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below: blood, fire and billowing smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon will become blood before the coming of the great and sublime day of Our God. And all who call upon the name of Our God will be saved.'"

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Rachel Held Evans in
"Searching For Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church"*

Jesus says the Spirit is like wind. Employing a bit of wordplay, he uses the Greek word *pneuma*—which means both spirit and wind—and says the windy Spirit blows wherever it pleases. You can hear the windy Spirit, Jesus says, and you can even see its effects. But you don't know where it has come from and you don't get to tell it where to go. The windy Spirit just shows up. This is what's most annoying and beautiful about the windy Spirit and why we so often miss it. It has this habit of showing up in all the wrong places and among all the wrong people, defying our categories and refusing to take direction. The Spirit is like wind, like fire, like a bird, like a breath—moving through every language and every culture of this world, bursting out of every category and defying every metaphor. Who's to say where She will travel next?

Third Reading ~ *adapted from Brené Brown in "The Gifts of Imperfection"*

Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion. Practicing spirituality brings a sense of perspective, meaning, and purpose to our lives.