

2024 B PENTECOST SUNDAY MAY 18

Many of us attended church as youngsters. Memorized prayers. Learned catechism. Hoisted a backpack of good Christian living: good morality, devotion, always tell the truth. Pray more. Do more. Believe more. Most of us tried.

But, boy, did that trail grew steep. Peer pressure, raging hormones, and guilt conspired to convince us I'd never make it. The fire in our belly was running low on kindling. But where is the firewood?

The Lord does know it. He does care. It's not his will that we lead a lifeless life. He has something—No. Someone. You need to know.

We have heard of him in scripture and from the pulpit. And prayed: "Come Holy Spirit come. Fill the hearts of your faithful. Enkindle the fire of your love."

Ask the people, "Who is God the Father?" You have a ready reply. Or describe the Son?" Most of us will not hesitate to answer. But ask, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" Most of the believers have no clue.

God the Father? We comprehend the image. God as Jesus, the Son? That idea is manageable as well. But God as Spirit? The word itself is mystical.

I do recall an encounter in 1977 in my 2nd year of seminary. Charismatic Renewal Convention in my city in India. I heard Rev. Rufus describe the work of the Spirit: He is your friend. He is here to lead you home.

We prayed in small groups for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. My self and my buddies were honest to God. God has a soft spot for an honest prayer. I began to sense of the Spirit. He led me with a touch. It was a whisper, Mysterious. By all means, it was not my imagination. Not at all.

I requested strength. He gave me. I asked Spirit to heal the sick. More than once he did. I prayed for vitality and joy. Both returned.

One day while I was reading the words of Jesus describing the Holy Spirit: "Comforter and friend." I recall having the wonderful realization: I knew that Person. That was four decades ago. I began to call him my Heaven -Sent Helper.

He is the ally of the honest believer. He is our champion, our advocate, our guide. He comforts and directs us. He indwells, transforms, sustains, and will someday deliver us into our heavenly home. He is the executer of God's will on earth. He is here to infuse us with strength. Supernatural strength.

Was this not the promise of Jesus? He would not let his followers begin their ministries unless they knew and experience the Spirit. “Don’t begin telling others yet—stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”

By this point the disciples had spent three years in training. They had sat down with him around campfires, walked with him through villages and cities, witnessed him banish diseases and command demons. They knew his favorite food, jokes, and hangouts. But they were not ready. They had seen the empty tomb, touched his resurrected body, and spent forty days listening to the resurrected Christ teach about the kingdom. But they needed more.

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Luke 1: 8).

Mark it down. The Holy Spirit comes with power. Power to make good choices, keep promises, and silence the inner voices of fear and failure. Power to get out of your bed, get on with life, get busy about the right things in the right way. Power to face the unexpected, unwanted passages of time. Power. This is what Jesus promised then, and this is what Jesus promises still.

Consider the possibility of a life-giving relationship with the Holy Spirit. No more walking the path alone. No more carrying weight you were not intended to bear. It’s time for you to enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit and experience the vigorous life he offers.

The Bible makes more than 100 references to the Holy Spirit. Jesus says more about the Holy Spirit than he does about the church, marriage, finances, and the future. Why the emphasis on Him? God does not want a bunch of stressed-out, worn-out, done-in, and washed-up children representing him in the world. He wants us to be fresher day by day, hour by hour.

The Spirit is the dove of peace who calms us, the gift giver who equips us, the river of living water who flows out of us refresh the world (Matt. 3:16). God wants you to have the energizing strength of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God longs to give you his great power. He will guide, teach, and energize you. He will shoulder the burdens you were never intended to carry.

Challenges come with life, but they need not define your life. Help is here in the Holy Spirit.