



Pentecost (C)
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
June 9, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

+May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

On Tuesday this past week, St. Mark's continued hosting the organization, Families Against Narcotics, known as FAN. FAN has been meeting at St. Mark's for about three years now, and Mother Sue and I are there to be of support and assistance.

Some fifty-five participants gathered in the Parish Hall to be together, to support one another, to share stories of loss, to share stories of hope and to hear a presentation from a former judge, Judge Linda Davis. Judge Davis spoke with a kind of articulate passion which was captivating, engaging and extremely informative.

One of the things Judge Davis indicated was that we are becoming a more and more complacent society. Young people in particular are becoming less passionate about the world in which they live. As social media, cell phones, Twitter accounts, and other forms of communication drive more and more of us inward, passion for life around us seems to be slipping away.

For me and if I leave my house without my iPhone, you better believe that I drive right back into my garage. I run into the house and grab my phone. It seems to have become an extension of myself. I can't imagine not having it on my person just in case. Just in case of what? A call from the Archbishop of Canterbury? A call from the Governor? A call from God? Not likely.

Is it true that social media are more and more in control of our lives and we are being driven more and more inward? If so, then, passion for life, for justice, for peace, for compassion, for mercy and for the love of others may well indeed be diminishing.

Judge Davis highlighted the great need to have passion to fight the good fight against drug abuse and addiction. Each month, Mother Sue and I continue to learn that addictions are changing lives and entire families. Individuals continue to die at an alarming rate. This plus the continued rise in gun violence give me pause even as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

As Christians, we are passionate about the Holy Spirit of God coming in a dramatic way on the Apostles and followers of Jesus fifty days after the Resurrection. Pentecost, which means fiftieth, comes from the Greek word, *pentekoste*. Today's celebration has its origins in the Jewish Tradition. Pentecost was the celebration of "the second of the three great Jewish feasts, celebrated at Jerusalem yearly, the seventh week after the Passover, in grateful recognition of the completed harvest." (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/pentekoste.html>) So, major back-to-back Jewish festivals!

Our festival of Pentecost and the fruits of the Spirit are gifts given by God with deep roots in the Judeo-Christian Tradition. Today, we claim Pentecost as the Birthday of the Church.

Today, we heard the powerful reading from the Book of Acts, chronicling the descent of the Holy Spirit on those gathered in Jerusalem. It has become the tradition in the Church to read this reading in different languages to celebrate the message of Jesus open to people around the world.

We are passionate about Pentecost. The liturgical color is red, and St. Mark's looks beautiful in red.

Pentecost is one of the three most holy days in the Christian Calendar: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Today, we pull out all the stops, a cool organ term, to herald the gifts of the Spirit given to those who believe.

Jesus told his disciples that he would return to the Father. A new Advocate, the Spirit, would come to empower the disciples for mission. Can we possibly imagine what that day might have been like for those gathered together, the Apostles and the disciples including Mary, the Mother of Jesus! Just imagine that Jews and non-Jews were gathered together and were enabled to comprehend who Jesus was, what he came to do and his legacy of love for all people!

Tradition tells us that there are seven primary gifts of the Holy Spirit. Those sevenfold gifts are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety or reverence and the fear or awe of the Lord. (www.en.m.wikipedia.org) Great theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine of Hippo wrote about these gifts. For us, these gifts are ours. They have been and continue to be freely given.

The gifts of the Spirit can give us what we just might need to be faithful followers of Jesus. We can commit our lives to all for which he gave his life. The gifts of the Spirit can enable us to be passionate about life. For Christians, that passion means being serious about the needs of others and the needs of the world in which we find ourselves. I believe it also means being people of gratitude, people who say "Thank you" to God and to one another.

As followers of Jesus, we live in the world. We take what we learn in this place into the world. We ask God to transform us into passionate people who truly care about others. We care about the hungry, the poor, the homeless, those suffering from addiction or violence of any kind, those without proper drinking water, the sick and the dying. Today, we also care about graduates and wish them all the best in the next phase of their life.

As Christians, we are called to passionately care and love all people in life. How we do that is up to us. How we do that is informed by listening to the inner voice of the Spirit within us.

God's Spirit calls us to be all we can be as followers of Jesus. For some of us, that just may mean a shift in life. It may mean being more attentive to who we really are before God and what changes we might need to make in life. Can we be more other oriented, more kind, more generous, more caring and more loving? Personally, I can say with certainty, "yes". How about you?

The gifts of the Spirit of God are gifts we have already been given. We can embrace them with passion. We can make them our own and enable them to become life-giving examples of God's Spirit, active and alive. May it be so today and every day! Happy Pentecost! Amen.