

A Communication Miracle

Intro

(Two sentences spoken in French.)

Did anybody understand me?

Speaking French, I just said that “Today I would like to speak to you about what happened at Pentecost. This day the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples with signs of wind and fire.”

I found this great website which will translate from English into other languages. You type the English and it types the other language when you press the “*Translate*” button. Then you can actually listen to the translation. Isn’t that terrific. It’s not perfect though. Fortunately I know quite a lot about French so I played around with it until I got a translation that made the best sense. I love languages and using this website was a lot of fun. As much as I enjoyed it though, it was no “Pentecost” experience.

The Day of Pentecost

For the Jews, Pentecost or Shavuot is a spring harvest festival that takes place 50 days after Passover. It also celebrates the giving of the Law to Moses.

This was a perfect time for the out pouring of the Holy Spirit because so many Jews were in Jerusalem. They came from everywhere and spoke many different languages. Some of them may have been bilingual but not all. What happened on Pentecost was absolutely amazing because the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in different languages and each person listening to hear what they were saying in their own language. The disciples were on fire that day declaring the wonderful works of God and their enthusiasm attracted a lot of attention. *The crowd, amazed and perplexed, asked one another, "What does this mean?"*

Peter's Sermon

That was the perfect set up for Peter's sermon. They were ready to listen. First Peter assured them that they were not drunk at nine in the morning. Then he went on to say that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel regarding how the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all people, young and old, male and female. Peter then transitioned into preaching to them about Jesus of Nazareth, citing a number of psalms about his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

That was quite a sermon, and Peter didn't spend anytime preparing it at all as I do each Sunday.

Instead the Holy Spirit spontaneously gave him the right words to say, and on that day 3000 people believed in Jesus and were baptized. These were the first 3000 people to join the Christian Church and to take it global as they returned home and spread the word. The rest, as they say, is history right on up to today. And the beat goes on to future generations until Jesus comes again.

These Last Days

These are the last days, and the Holy Spirit has been poured out on us - men, women, young and old alike. We are the Church in today's world who are called to spread God's word. We may not have the gift of languages as the apostles did on that day but there is one language we all understand and that we all "speak" – and that is the language of LOVE.

The Jews celebrate the giving of the law to Moses on Pentecost /Shavuot but Jesus gave us a new law, the law of the Spirit saying, "Love one another as I have loved you." To do this is to obey all the Law and the Prophets combined. We have access to the same Holy Spirit that came upon the apostles and disciples at Pentecost - that same Spirit who transformed these timid disciples into men "on fire" for God.

Will we allow the Holy Spirit to turn us into a people on fire too? Are we excited about our relationship with God and ready to praise God's wonders everyday in our own lives? Can we commit ourselves to the job of doing what it takes to transcend the cultural and ethical barriers that divide us so that we can all become one in Christ? Are we open to the changes the Spirit brings - those gusts of wind and fresh air that are flying through the Church - or do we like things just the way they are and just the way we've always done them? Will we blow where the Spirit leads? These are the "Pentecost" questions we ask ourselves today.

Each day in our prayers we boldly call on the help and power of the Spirit. As Christians we see every day as Pentecost. Before the Spirit came upon them, the apostles were timid and confused. With the power of the Spirit they daringly stepped outside and began to proclaim the good news. They were transformed. They had a new sense of their Christ-given mission and off they went. Their one focus was to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

My friends, the Holy Spirit can and does transform us, too, when we allow it.

Believe it - the Spirit of God comes to us and lives in us and changes us and empowers us to be different than we have ever been before as Christians – seeing ourselves as God’s children, entrusted with the gospel of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Wherever God reigns in this world, the Spirit is moving, winds rush, different races and cultures understand one another and with the Holy Spirit nothing is impossible. In that confidence, off we go in Jesus’ name. Amen.