

## Sermon for Pentecost Sunday - MabuhayRadio

Written by The Rev. Dr. Winfred B. Vergara

Sunday, 27 May 2007 05:33 - Last Updated Saturday, 31 January 2009 04:27

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### PENTECOST: The Coming of the Holy Spirit

By The Rev. Dr. Fred Vergara.

*( This sermon was delivered on May 27, 2007, at the St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Churches, Seaford, New York at 10:00 a.m.; and the Holy Child Episcopal Church, Woodside, Queens, New York at its 5:00 p.m. service. )*

Today is the Sunday of Pentecost, also called the “birthday of the Church.” On this day, two thousand years ago, the promised Holy Spirit came down like a mighty rushing wind. Divided tongues as of fire rested upon the apostles. The apostles began to speak God’s Word in various tongues and the people--- from various races, cultures, tribes and nationalities---were awed, bewildered and convicted of sin.

Texts: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; John 20:19-23

#### Introduction

Today is the Sunday of Pentecost, also called the “birthday of the Church.” On this day, two thousand years ago, the promised Holy Spirit came down like a mighty rushing wind. Divided tongues as of fire rested upon the apostles. The apostles began to speak God’s Word in various tongues and the people--- from various races, cultures, tribes and nationalities---were awed, bewildered and convicted of sin.

On that day, 3,000 people received Jesus and were baptized. “They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship and the breaking of the bread and prayers. And the Lord added to their number daily those who are being saved.” It is estimated that in just a few days thereafter, over 15,000 people became members of the early Church. What makes this extraordinary awakening and spiritual revival?

There are three factors on the Day of Pentecost.

### 1. The unity of the apostles

The first thing that one notices on the attitude of the apostles on the day of Pentecost was their remarkable unity. When Jesus was alive, the apostles were always having some jealousy and infighting. James and John asked to sit on the right hand of Jesus and the other apostles got upset. Prior to his arrest, Judas betrayed him and after his arrest, Peter denied him. When he died on the cross, only one apostle, John was present. When he appeared after his resurrection, Thomas was often absent. On the day of Pentecost...“they were all together in one place.” There was solidarity and there was unity. Unity is therefore a pre-requisite for blessing. The book of Proverbs says, “behold, how pleasant and how good it is, when brethren dwell in unity. For there the Lord commands the blessing.” Where there is unity, there is harmony, where there is harmony there is peace and where there is peace, the Lord commands the blessings.

### 2. The Timing of God

Prior to his ascension, Jesus told the disciples to “stay in the city.” One of the apostles asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has set on his own authority but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you shall be my witnesses from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world.” But wait . . . and the apostles waited. They waited in prayer, they waited in hope, they waited in expectation---and they stayed put in the city.

One of the things many of us find hard to do is to wait upon the Lord. We get impatient with time.

Once there was a Pentecostal pastor who was a guest preacher in the Episcopal Church. He asked the Senior Warden, “How long should I be allowed to preach?” The Senior Warden said, “You can preach as long as you want but at 11:00 o’clock, we are out of the church.”

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We are a people who cannot be at peace with waiting. We cannot sit still. And so we crowd ourselves with so many activities. Martha was so busy in the kitchen when Jesus visited their home and she got upset with Mary who was simply sitting at the feet of Jesus. While Jesus honored the hospitality of Martha, he also said that Mary had chosen the better portion---that of waiting and listening upon the Lord.

In Greek, there are two words for time: the first is *chronos*, the historical time, but the other one is *kairos*, God's time. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles were not mindful of the *chronos* but of *kairos*. They were not as much concerned with the time of the clock; they were concerned with the time of God's visitation. The prophet Isaiah once said, "those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." O, help us Lord, to wait.

### 3. The power to change

There was a story of a man who loved the color yellow. He had a yellow car, a yellow house and on his garden, he planted yellow roses. His living room was yellow, his basement was yellow, and his kitchen was yellow, his bathroom yellow, and his bedroom yellow. And he wore yellow pajamas. One day, he got sick---of hepatitis---and turned yellow. His wife called for an ambulance and the paramedics came and went up the house and after thirty minutes the wife asked "How's my husband?" and the paramedics replied, "We don't know, we have not found him yet."

Someone asked, "What happened to the dinosaurs?" The answer, "nothing happened to the dinosaur." While all around its world has changed, the dinosaurs did not and so they disappeared.

The coming of the Holy Spirit has given the apostles the power to change their lives and their outlook. There was a tremendous transformation: from fear to faith, from timidity to boldness. They began to speak in various tongues; they began to see that God's blessing is not only for the Jews but also for all peoples of God. They began to see that the Kingdom of God, which Jesus had inaugurated, is one without borders, one without outcast, one without discrimination. It is going to be a church for all people, in all places, in the entire world. And so they were willing

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to go where God wants them to go, to do what God wants them to do, and to preach the Gospel to all the ends of the world. And they were willing to welcome all people---because the Church---is a house of prayer for all peoples.

### Conclusion

I believe that The Episcopal Church today, is being true to the spirit of early Church that is born at Pentecost. It is a church that practices radical hospitality---to welcome everyone who wants to go back home to God, to welcome everyone regardless of race, color, culture, language and even sexual orientation. For a time, we will suffer rejection from those fellow brothers and sisters who believe otherwise, but in the end, I believe that God will vindicate us.

The theology of radical hospitality or “unconditional inclusion” is the theology of Pentecost. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; God loves people unconditionally and the Holy Spirit is given to everyone who believes and who wishes to worship and serve God. I come to The Episcopal Church because it is a balanced church. It is both catholic and protestant, liberal and conservative.

Our faith understanding comes from Scriptures, Tradition and Reason. Freedom and responsibility are held in the balance. At a time when the world is building walls and marking borders, we as a Church are building bridges.

May we continue to remain steadfast in this faith, looking to Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Amen.

Editor’s Notes: The Rev. Dr. Winfred Vergara is the Director of Ethnic Congregational Development and National Missioner for Asiamerica Ministries of The Episcopal Church in New York City; he also serves as Supply Clergy for St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, in Seaford, (Long Island), New York and priest at Holy Child-St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Woodside (Queens), New York.

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