

Pentecost, 2016

Dear Members and Friends of St. John's,

This Sunday, May 15, the Church celebrates, together with Christmas and Easter, the third great festival of the church year, Pentecost. Pentecost, a Jewish festival, commemorates God's giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. It was on the Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection and ascension that the Holy Spirit of the risen and ascended Christ came upon Jesus' disciples and other Christian believers in Jerusalem. Pentecost has been called the Church's birthday because by the waters of Holy Baptism the Spirit not only plants the seed of faith in us, but makes us daughters and sons of God and brothers and sisters to one another in the family of faith, the Church. Our very faith in Jesus is a gift and work of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes: "No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit." (I Corinthians 12:3) And it is by the Holy Spirit that the Savior, Jesus Christ, is not long ago and far away but dwells within each of us here and now as the Spirit makes real for us all that Jesus taught and accomplished. There would be no proclamation of the Word, no Sacraments, no faith, no believers, no witness, no ministries...no Church without the Spirit's work!

The liturgical color for the Feast of Pentecost is red, reminding us of the tongues of fire that appeared over the heads of the disciples that first Christian Pentecost and the Spirit's fire which fills each of us as we seek to witness and serve in the power of Christ's Name. And so, you are asked to wear red for the Pentecost Mass this Sunday. Following Mass our annual "family picture" will be taken, so I hope and pray that all of you will be present.

I'm thrilled and thankful as I sense a new Pentecost occurring at St. John's....the Holy Spirit is at work! I see the Spirit drawing us closer together, affirming both our diversity and our baptismal unity. The Spirit is making our

community, increasingly, a place of welcome and hospitality to all who come seeking Jesus. The Spirit is sending us beyond ourselves to serve in Jesus' Name the Milton Community Food Bank, Stockings for Soldiers, The Way Home, Camp Arrowhead, and the Christmas Tree Angel Project, to name a few. In future letters to you I will be focusing more specifically on each of these ministries of outreach.

It was a joy to behold God's Spirit working among us over the last several Saturdays as we meticulously cleaned up our property, landscaped the parking lot, participated in the Milton community-wide yard sale to raise \$765 to support our outreach programs even more, and our Sunday School teachers, children, and I, the big kid!, having great fun as we created tie-dye T-shirts (our version of Joseph's coat of many colors), followed by an intergenerational luncheon with the landscapers! Also, on Mother's Day we honored and praised God for each "mother in the faith" at St. John's, presenting them with a flowering plant.

The Holy Spirit is leading us, also, in becoming more faithful stewards of our building and grounds. The Long Range Planning Committee spent a Saturday doing an inventory of property projects facing us and has prioritized a new roof and re-shingling the walls of the Parish House as the most pressing ones. Now that all the ivy has been removed from the church's entrance, the Landscape Committee is eagerly anticipating re-landscaping our front entrance once a decision is made regarding the roof.

The Holy Spirit is directing our vision for the future, as well, with plans for me to lead a weekly Bible study in the fall. And there is even discussion of the possibility for a choir, or some form of choral group, to start-up, also in the fall!

The Pentecost we celebrate this Sunday bears witness to the fact that the Holy Spirit's work never ceases. The Spirit is alive, well, and working at St. John's bringing faith, new life, unity, and service!

Pentecost Blessings,

Father Tom