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St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
The Day of Pentecost/Year A  
June 4, 2017  
Text: John 20:19-23

### “Receive the Holy Spirit”

“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house...”

Wait! What day is this? Today's Gospel sounds awfully familiar! Doesn't it? Oh yes, we've heard this passage recently! On the Second Sunday of Easter-only it didn't stop so short. That day it included the story of Thomas. Today we hear it again because it's Pentecost.

We hear it again because that first day of the week was so powerful and so unlike any other day that ever was or will be. We hear it again because the earthly powers that were, thought they had rid themselves of an instigator, a trouble-maker. His followers would go back to doing what they had been doing before he came onto the scene. All of their hopes and all of their dreams-dashed upon his arrest. They were as buried as he was. “He was crucified, died, and was buried,” so says the Creed. And we hear the story again because something remarkable, something extraordinary happened in the wee hours of the morning. The earth quaked and the huge stone that blocked the entrance of his tomb was rolled away and Jesus of Nazareth rose fully alive to the glory of God.

His friends had waited as they were told. Waited for what, they were not exactly sure. Some of the women had said they had no need to disturb the jars of spices and perfumes. They had seen his empty tomb. And Mary Magdalene had come running to find them to give them his message but they didn't seem to believe her either. Terror and fear had bound them up making it too hard for anything to make sense.

Then suddenly Jesus is in the room fully alive. Shalom. “Peace” he says to his friends who had not held out hope of ever again hearing his voice or looking into his eyes.

Shalom. “Peace be with you,” he said again. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And then upon the lot of them he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit...”

Jesus knew that people would no longer run into him along shores or on hillsides or in the synagogue. They would encounter him in the apostles and eventually in us. Over time and centuries, by being immersed in the waters of baptism, by the hearing and preaching of the Good News of the Risen Christ, by the breaking of bread and sharing in the prayers; the early Church has become us and we have become them for we share the same Spirit of God. The same Spirit who stirred the waters during the creation of the world and who breathed life into clay, who sent Jesus out into the wilderness and then led him out to do his work in the world. The same Spirit whose presence was breathed into the disciples that evening of the first week continues to breath, and mold, and shape us so that we can be who we are meant to be: the hands and feet and voice of Christ in a world longing for healing and change.

The Feast of Pentecost reminds us that we no longer need to hesitate or fear going beyond the norm. And by the same token, we are no longer bound by what is comfortable and familiar. The love and Spirit of Christ compels us, urges us, to go beyond ourselves in order that the kingdom of God be made visible and known.

Our calling as disciples is never a confirmation of the status quo. The Spirit goes where the Spirit wills and alights those on whom the Spirit chooses. Our first reading from Numbers affirms this as the Spirit came down upon the seventy elders surrounding the tent and they prophesied. And so did Eldad and Medad!

So to each of us from the youngest to the eldest “is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” To each one of us, gifts are given to help us be God’s change agents in the world. Agents who together seek justice and peace and those left on the margins. Agents willing to assist the poor and the needy, and speak up for the refugee and the homeless. Agents bold enough to break through barriers of class, race, ethnicity, language and so many other things. Agents who are bold enough to turn the customs of society upside down and fling open wide the doors of this church so that our collective resources and gifts can be shared with our neighbors.

The path we are called to walk is not a path we can do on our own. It takes being open to the peace that only Jesus can bring. It takes being open to walking in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you,” Jesus says to each of us. So breathe in deeply, sisters and brothers, and “receive the Holy Spirit.”

Baptism gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this morning we welcome into Christ’s fold, Declyn Douglas Brown....