Pentecost, Year A, May 24, 2026
Pentecost Revisited

When I was a kid going to Catholic school we received the Sacrament of Confirmation in 8th grade. So that was the year we learned all about the Holy Spirit – because that is what we were expected to receive with the anointing of confirmation. We learned the Holy Spirit's place in the Trinity, its 12 fruits, its seven gifts:

Courage, wisdom, judgment, knowledge, reverence, understanding and wonder and awe.

And we read all about its first appearance in the Second Chapter of Acts. Now that part was impressive to us 13 year olds. House-shaking wind, tongues of fire! Prophesy! Healing! Speaking foreign languages without taking any classes!

Cool!

Will those things happen to us, we asked?

No, was the answer. God used those signs then to get the church started, we were told. But now we get the Spirit in more orderly ways, through Sacraments, through prayer, and going to church. But you will probably get some money and those seven gifts:

Courage, wisdom, judgment, knowledge, reverence, understanding and wonder and awe.

Oh. OK.

I wish my teacher had said something like: Who knows? The Spirit has a mind of her own. Do you want to be driven into the street to preach? What do you hope will happen?

But that might have been a little risky at the close of the 1970s. Better to keep the lid on things.

A few years later, though, I had the start of my own answer.

In Akron Ohio, where I grew up, the Catholic Youth Organization provided our sports during the school year and camp in the summer. And it also ran a very popular youth ministry program, called Search for Christian Maturity.

You had to be 15 to go on a Search retreat – which went from Friday night through Sunday afternoon at Camp Christopher. It was run by fellow teens, with the help of adults and clergy, and was filled with a whirlwind of talks and songs and skits, late-night

Confession and early morning breakfasts. All I can say is that by Sunday everybody was exhausted and giddy and a little more emotional than they typically liked to let on.

And that's when someone from the Search team would stand up on a chair and read The Pentecost Story from the Second Chapter of Acts. And when they got to that part about being accused of being drunk on New Wine, we'd all laugh and clap and cheer.

Because it was true. That's how it felt.

We were drunk on relationship and friends' stories of new-found faith. We were drunk with Scriptures and Sacrament and adults who loved us for who we were. We were drunk with a Divine love that we hadn't really felt in church but which would send us back to Mass to see if perhaps Jesus had been there all along.

It was a taste of the wild side of God. It would scare family members, and confuse friends, and it would stump clergy who weren't expecting that many questions from a 10th grader.

The drunken feeling quickly settled into something that compelled us more gently to weekly small group meetings, and bible studies, into service projects and onto future Search retreat teams.

It called some of us to be youth ministers, and others to be clergy and religious, some to be teachers and members of the military and health care providers, parents and business owners and volunteers.

That's how the Holy Spirit works.

It's not that the Holy Spirit doesn't arrive like wind and fire anymore. In fact, in praying directly for the Holy Spirit to come I've seen her knock people down and pick people up. I've seen her take over a room. I've felt the burn inside.

At the same time the Holy Spirit has so many ways of shaking the foundations and filling the streets with passionate people. Sometimes it moves as gently and as regularly as breath in the passion that prompts care and commitment.

Even in the early church, the Holy Spirit didn't rattle the house unless it wanted to draw a crowd – which it did occasionally, but not all the time. The Holy Spirit more often entered a person through a touch in the laying on of hands, or by way of baptismal water and blessed oil slathered onto the body of a new Christian.

And let's not forget that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost had two parts – the part where the Spirit arrived and the part where the disciples welcomed it in. This

was not a home invasion or a possession – these followers of Jesus had been prepared and they had been waiting.

They had walked with Jesus for three years, had been steeped in his parables, his all-night healings on the beach, his miracles, his great weakness for people of faith. And then from the Ascension to Pentecost these same people had been alone together in prayer.

So when the promised helper, the Holy Spirit came, they were ready. It took the shape of their longing for the Christ.

It still does.

If we long for God to come and fix the mess that this world is in, to renew the face of the earth, then know that it's a two-part process. Only this time, the Spirit waits for us to arrive and open our hearts and welcome it in. So that it can love through us. Move through us. Heal through us. Announce God's presence through us.

If we have the audacity to pray *Come Holy Ghost Creator Blest and in our hearts take up thy rest,* then we better understand that the Spirit has a different idea of rest than we do. How ready is your heart to go where the Spirit will drive you?

Cause we can't avoid the daily news. We know where the Spirit wants to go.

Though we don't always know what shape it will take, I can suggest this:

If the Holy Spirit is fire, be tinder. If it is wind, be a turbine. If it is a sound wave, be a receiver and an amplifier. If it is fuel, open your tank. If it is love, open your heart.

And if it's new wine, drink deeply friends, drink deeply.

Amen