

Sermon for Pentecost Sunday May 23 2021 by *The Rev. Mary Bell-Plouffe*

I have 2 favorite stoles, and this morning I'm wearing one of them.
As you can see, it's red for Pentecost, and it has symbols
for the Holy Spirit
fire on one side
and a dove on the other.
It's the stole I had made for my ordination.. ..
so I'm sure you can appreciate why it's one of my favorites.

I love the power and energy of the colour of red
I love the power and energy of the flames of fire
I love the power and energy of the dove of peace.
And quite frankly, I love the Holy Spirit.
[Is it any wonder that the Feast of Pentecost is
my favorite celebration?

We sometimes refer to Pentecost as the birthday of the church.
But Pentecost isn't just a Christian celebration.
It's an ancient Jewish Feast - marking 50 days from Passover
when Moses led the people
out of slavery in Egypt.
On that 50th day, Moses went up the mountain
and he returned with the 10 commandments.

Pentecost at the time of Jesus was an agricultural festival.
Farmers brought the first sheaves of wheat from the crop
and offered it to God -- partly as a thank offering
and partly as a prayer that the rest of the crop would be safely gathered in.
Pentecost is a celebration of first fruits for Jews.
And Pentecost is a celebration of first fruits for Christians.
It's the first fruit of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension.

*'When the day of Pentecost came
They were all together in one place
And suddenly from Heaven, there came a sound
like the rush of a violent wind
And it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
Divided tongues, like fire appeared among them
and a tongue rested on each of them.*

*All of them **were filled** with the Holy Spirit
And began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.'*

This is what Jesus had promised,
Jesus had promised that he'd send his spirit
And now it's happened
The disciples are **filled**,
they're overflowing.
This motley crew of followers
who'd all scattered at his arrest,
who'd been trembling in fear behind locked doors
are now proclaiming God's wonderful deeds of power
in languages they've never spoken before!
That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

Peter, who in the gospels seems to only
open his mouth to put his foot in it;
Peter, who 3 times denies Jesus;
now stands and addresses the crowd.
He preaches such a powerful sermon
that 3000 people are baptized
and become followers of Jesus.
And Peter, from this day on
continues to preach and proclaim Jesus as Lord
until his last dying breath.

That's the power of the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit is a spirit of power.
The Holy Spirit is a spirit of truth.
The Holy Spirit is a spirit of love.

That crowd in Jerusalem heard the disciples,
filled with the Spirit?
How do we hear the Spirit today?
Where do we hear the Spirit today?

Richard Rohr is a 77 year old Franciscan priest,
He's the founder of the Centre for Action and Contemplation.
He's written more than 30 books,
thousands of people receive his daily meditation

in their inbox each day.

In The Naked Now.

Richard Rohr writes

that the church has taught people **what** to believe
but not **how** to believe.

We've memorized creeds and learned prayers,
but we haven't focussed on connecting with the divine.

We've been taught **about** the Holy Spirit
but we haven't been guided and nurtured
and helped to recognize and identify the Holy Spirit.

How do we hear the Spirit today?

Where do we hear the Spirit today?

In 2004, we had a big party to celebrate 25 years on the farm.
One of our guests was Daniel's boyhood friend Georges,
who came from Montreal with a lady friend.
She'd been born and raised in Montreal, and really, it seemed,
had never been out of the city.

It was a great party.

After everything wound down, we all went to bed.

Georges and his lady friend were camping in the backyard, under a tree.

It was one of those special and rare nights,
when I heard from the north-west the sounds of coyotes,
and from the south-west the cry of a wolf.

The next morning I asked Georges if they'd heard the
coyotes and the wolf, and he said they had
and that his friend had asked
'Is that the chickens?'

If you've never heard the sound of a coyote
If you've never heard the sound of a wolf
If you've never heard the sound of a chickens
How can you possibly recognize them?
How can you possibly know what they are?

How do we hear the Spirit today?

Where do we hear the Spirit today?

Sometimes we hear the Spirit in the voice of another.
I told you that this red stole is one of my favorite stoles.
My other favorite stole is purple, and with all of my stoles
It comes with a story.

It was Christmas 1993.
We were all gathered in the basement at my parent's house
in Toronto, opening gifts.
I'd completed my M.Div. 2 years before,
and was working as a chaplain in a longterm care facility,
one of the very few positions available to me
as a married Roman Catholic woman.
But I felt a longing to celebrate Baptism and Eucharist,
and although our family worshipped weekly at our local R.C. church
really all I was doing there was moving the chairs for the choir.
I was chaplain to 252 residents during the week
but come Sunday morning,
my ministry wasn't acknowledged nor supported.
Anyway, this Christmas morning I opened my gift from my sister Linda
and I burst into tears.
It was a stole-- this purple stole.
You see, she didn't realize that you needed to be ordained to wear a stole.
My mother asked me 'When will you wear it?'
And without even thinking I said
'When I become an Anglican'.
I hadn't consciously been thinking about it
but obviously things were perking on the inside.
And then less than a month later,
Canon Ron Davidson from St. John's in Peterborough telephoned me.
He'd asked me to lead a Lenten study,
and he called to tell me the wardens had approved.
He said to me
'Yes, yes, yes, we want you.'
He was talking about the Lenten program,
But for me, it was like the voice of God.

Douro is an Irish Catholic community.
Our children all attended the local Catholic school.
For the first time I thought,
I could go and do what I need to do,

and the children could still stay and remain part of their community.
Daniel, my ever supportive husband said to me
'If you can't use your gifts where you are, go where you can use them.'
So the next time I saw Canon Ron, I said to him
'I want to become an Anglican and be ordained'.
Sometimes we hear the Spirit through the actions of another.
Sometimes we hear the Spirit through the voice of another.

Sometimes we hear the Spirit within ourselves
The psalmist declares - 'Be still and know that I am God'.
There's a connection that can take place when we're still
when we're centred.
Maybe we're at prayer; maybe we're gardening;
maybe we're cleaning the oven
maybe we're not doing much of anything,
and thoughts of someone keep coming into our mind.
So we pick up the phone and we give that person a call and they say
-'I'm so glad you called. You called at just the right time'.
That's the Holy Spirit working in us.
Sometimes we see the Spirit at work in ourselves or in someone else
through their forgiveness, their compassion, their love.

Sometimes we hear the voice of the Spirit in Scripture-when we read some
sacred words and they set fire to our hearts.

But we need to be alert.
Because not every spirit is a holy spirit.
Things that bring anger, resentment, hostility, jealousy, are not holy.
We need to test the spirits --as St. John says in his first letter
Beloved, do not believe every spirit,
but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.(1 John 4)

So how do we test the spirits?
Thankfully, St. Paul has given us the litmus test in Galatians 5:22
The fruit of the spirit is
Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness

Generosity
Faithfulness
Gentleness and
Self-control

Do we see these growing in someone -- that's the Holy Spirit
Do we see these growing in ourselves -- that's the Holy Spirit
All healthy things grow. Are we growing ?

I'm a library user

--I have a membership at Peterborough Public library.

They have curbside pickup, so I order my books online
and then go and pick them up.

When I pick them up, I get the books, and a check-out receipt,
listing the books and the date they're due back.

But the last couple of times, I've noticed something else.

At the bottom of the check out receipt
after the list of books and due date is a line:

Value of today's visit

I checked out 4 books last week and my

Value of today's visit was \$153.08.

I think this is a good thing

to be reminded of the value of this service.

This is the Feast of Pentecost

when we celebrate the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

It's a gift we need to value;

a gift we need to cherish;

a gift we need to nurture.

a gift we should never take for granted.

Let's listen for that Spirit

within one another, within ourselves

within scripture, within all of creation.

It's the Feast of Pentecost.

Let's be out there in the wind,

opening ourselves to be filled

with this Holy Spirit of wind and fire

that will empower us, lead us,

and transform us, and all the earth.

Amen.