

Let us pray... Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, descend upon our hearts. May we feel your burning presence in our midst, in our bodies, and in our lives. May we be open to your call, brave to step forth on that path, and may we speak your truths and promises in the world you so love... Amen...

Today we are commemorating Pentecost, and Pentecost is often referred to as the birth of the church...

As told in the book of Acts, the apostles were gathered together, along with many others, in observance of the Jewish holiday, Shavuot.

Shavuot takes place 50 days after the Passover celebration, and hence was also referred to by those who spoke Greek as Pentecost.

As Pentecost comes from the Greek word pentekoste which means fiftieth.

And today, the church celebrates Pentecost 50 days after Easter.

And we do this by remembering back to the original first gathering where the hearts of thousands were converted to follow the risen Christ.

Hearts that were opened by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

As the Holy Spirit descended upon them. Stirring and moving them to be welcomed as a child of God through baptism.

And that first day of Pentecost, about 3 thousand people were baptized.

A powerful image... And an image that is hard to wrap your head around... As 3 thousand people, is a lot of people!

And another image that is hard to wrap one's head around was from our Ezekial reading today... And the valley of dry bones...

A valley that is transformed when God knits the bones together properly, attaching sinew, covering them with flesh, and filling them with the Spirit through breath...

Two powerful images... One with breath, another with baptism, that show us how the Spirit is powerfully present, both in the valley of dry bones and on that first Pentecost Sunday...

Two very unexpected places for the Spirit to show up... Neither were in a church, neither were even in a building.

Which means that the Holy Spirit is on the loose... Bringing God's mercy, grace, and love in places we least expect.

And if we are being honest, this is one area we might struggle with today...

Because it is easier to think about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit when we are in church... When we are in places that we expect to encounter God....

Rather than when we are out and about living our daily lives...

For example, the other day I had a meeting at Vino Latte... Our meeting had come to an end and we were just getting up to leave when a woman came over and asked us if we would sing happy birthday to her dad who was about to walk in...

She proceeded to walk around asking everyone else who was there, until we all gathered around her dad, surprising him by singing happy birthday.

And to my surprise it sounded mostly in tune...

It was something so simple, and yet something so unexpected... Something that brought a little extra love to this dad on his birthday.

All because his daughter took a chance and put herself out there, when it would have been easier to not have said anything.

Which makes me wonder... How often do we not take the chance to put ourselves out there, allowing the Spirit to work in us?

How much are we missing when it comes to the movement of the Holy Spirit?

Afterall, that is how the church started... By the movement of the Spirit...

A church that began without a place of worship, without a church building. A church that was on the move... Lived out with people gathered in homes, or spending time together in community.

Which is a challenge for us... To go out into the mission field of life and be the church to others through Christ's love.

To be curious, be courageous, and be Christ together.

Because the Gospel isn't about being successful or doing everything right, or even having a perfect answer...

The Gospel is about being faithful, showing up, being your true authentic self, and loving others how Christ loved us.

Because we are a community of love...

Which is what I see here at St. John... As you all have cultivated this wonderful space to worship, to come together and be recharged... To sing, pray, and experience the body of Christ together through communion.

An intentional space that has been tended to with love and grace... Where we will soon welcome new members...

And welcoming these new members is just the start of an ongoing invitation... An invitation that spills over into every day... By inviting others to come to St. John...

By getting to know the people who come here better... With simple things like wearing a name tag, to start the conversation...

So, we can grow deeper in relationship together, to discover what we have in common, and also, to celebrate our differences.

And the good news is, there are endless opportunities to show up and grow in relationship... And yet, even though the opportunities are endless, the time that we have to engage in them, with one another, is so very short.

Which is why it is imperative that you jump in, even when you are afraid...
Even when you are unsure... Trusting that the Spirit will give you strength...
Even when you least expect it...

Because the Spirit just loves to show up in places unexpected...

And the Spirit can bring meat and substance to the bare bones of ideas...

And God can take dry, tired, and worn-out bones and create a new future—
a future filled with God's Spirit within...

And this is what hope is all about... Hope that does not disappoint...

Because no matter what happens all pathways lead to Christ...

Christ who called us to love one another in our daily lives.

And what a better opportunity to live into this calling, to live into our
commandment to love, then by welcoming new members today...

And after today, to keep digging in... To keep an open mind and heart, to
put yourself out there and see where the Spirit is calling...

To take a leap and plunge into the deep waters, letting the Spirit guide you
with the wind on the sea... Amen.