

**Pentecost Homily**  
**ACTS 2:1-11**  
**Thom Trunzo**

For most of my life, Pentecost has been some sort of a mystery to me; something that was almost impossible for me to get my arms around. It never really made much sense, especially with the images that the writers used. “Tongues of Fire” resting on their heads” for example left me more confused than enlightened, and the artists’ renderings of that event seemed ridiculous not inspiring! Other images such as the Holy Spirit being a “Dove” and “...a driving wind filling the room...” were also a bit strange, especially in light that Elijah, from the Old Testament, did not find God in the driving wind, but rather in the “sheer silence.”

There is a Lakota story called, “Grandfather Says This.” It is a parable of a grandfather teaching his young grandchild. One part speaks the same truth as today’s scripture when the Grandfather says, *When you stand against a fierce wind, it is not trying to knock you down, but rather trying to teach you to be strong.*

But as I matured and grew by studying and listening to others, I came to appreciate the images and understood that these points of confusion for me were precisely the point of Pentecost. I don’t have to be drawn to the images or, for that matter, even understand them, for who can capture God? The point is that the disciples had locked themselves in a room primarily out of fear. Perhaps this is exactly what they did, or perhaps even the “locked room” was not a literal place, but just another important imaged depicting the terror that immobilized them. And whether it was a literal room or not, the fact is that they were locked behind doors and confined by walls of their own design so that they were paralyzed by their own fears, unable to go out to meet the world with their messages of new life and hope.

And while the account of them all speaking in foreign languages is a miracle unto itself, it MUST become real for us or it remains just a story. I think this miracle happens in our everyday lives and happens frequently. How many times have we heard a parent say something like this regarding his or her teenager, “I don’t know what to do! Nothing I say seems to reach him or her?” But a teacher, or grandmother or an author of a book or poem or a neighbor is able to speak the language the adolescent understands and the youth responds.

We have in our world spiritual or cultural “Bridge Builders,” those people who embrace cultures and religions quite different from their own and meet those people on their own terms in peace. For example, while most will walk past a drug addict, there is that one special person who stops and connects in such a way that the addict responds and seeks help in turning life around. Or consider someone deep in grief, then a visitor arrives who has the soothing words or gentle physical touch that allows healing to begin. The examples are almost endless of people “speaking in tongues” in the same way today as was in our scripture reading we just heard; that is, in the language of the listener no matter what that language is.

I have come to embrace and even thrive in the many inconsistencies and paradoxes within our scriptures and traditions. I have come to understand that it is the same miracle told in today’s reading that is constantly at work today, that is, God speaking in the language that WE need and can understand. For Elijah, who was tormented with confusion and fleeing for his life, the powerful events of an earthquake and driving wind were not words he understood. He did not find God in those events, but

rather in the “sheer silence.” But the disciples needed something else, something stronger! So God, not able to reach them in the “sheer silence” of their seclusion, spoke to them with force in the “driving wind” that they understood.

I have stood listening to the trickle of a stream as well as the rumble of thunder so powerful that it vibrated within me. I’ve stood in a storm feeling lashing rain and mighty winds upon me and I have listened to our infant baby’s soft breath as she slept. I found God in all those places and events that are so diverse. It was the Spirit, speaking in tongues, reaching me in the language that I could understand in each of those very different moments of my life.

While today may be the Feast of Pentecost, Pentecost could be every day of our lives as the Spirit is encouraging us, strengthening us, inspiring us to emerge from behind our own locked doors of fear and doubt. Each day could be the day of the Spirit speaking to us in the language that we need and understand so that we may, in turn, go out in faith to listen to and speak with others in their unique language. Being filled with the Spirit is the reciprocal relationship of God listening and speaking to us and us, in turn, listening and speaking to others in the distinctive language of the listener.

This reading begins, *When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled...* so I end today’s homily with this, “May today and every day that follows be *the time for Pentecost to be fulfilled* in our lives!