

**Pentecost Sunday
June 12, 2011
4 PM and 12 Noon Liturgies**

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While ambling down route 6A in Yarmouthport last weekend, I passed the local, very pretty, Congregational church. Like many Protestant churches, they have a large billboard out front that frequently carries pithy and sometimes even inspirational messages to passersby. The current message was spelled out in large letters. It said: “Attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?”

I immediately thought of Pentecost. The celebration of Pentecost conveys many messages—some subtle and gentle, some striking and almost overpowering. It is an event and a celebration that has many images: the hurricane-force wind, the tongues of fire, the reversal of Babel where all can now understand each other’s language again. It is an event, John tells us in today’s gospel, that is all about forgiveness and healing. It is *the* gift of the resurrection now passed on to the new generation.

But we should not miss one more message of Pentecost—perhaps the most startling of all. Pentecost creates one of the most dramatic “attitudinal re-adjustments” that the world has ever seen. This small group of men and women who have been on one of the most dramatic emotional roller-coaster

rides in memory, is all of a sudden turned into the most courageous, talkative, empowered community imaginable.

Winds are impressive; fire is impressive; tongues can be impressive. But changing the attitudes of a multitude? Now that's really impressive! How does it happen, you ask? Pentecost happens because the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God, allows those disciples to finally "see" through Jesus' eyes. They "see" the poor being fed and clothed; they "see" the blind walking again; they "see" prisoners visited; they "see" the lame leaping about. And, most of all perhaps, they "see" what really is Good News being proclaimed. Jesus is alive and embodied now in them.

Those first disciples find now they can take as their own a prayer composed centuries later by the great Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Avila. "Christ has no body now on earth but ours. No hands but ours. No feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ looks out on the world. Ours are the feet with which he goes around doing good. Ours are the hands with which he blesses us now."

And when those disciples let go of themselves, of their pre-occupations with hurt, and fear, and anxieties and sadness, their whole attitude toward each other and the world changes. As the PBS television guru of self-help

(John Dyer) would say in his oft-repeated mantra: “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

In those first disciples, it is their *attitude* that shifts—from self-absorption into becoming a giver, a lover, a saint. That may be the most profound gift of the Holy Spirit. And as soon as one of them caught it, it burned like fire through them all: Parthians and Medes, Greeks and Romans. Changed attitudes are like that. And attitudes are contagious!

My brothers and sisters, God is not finished with Pentecost yet. We are not celebrating just some figment of historical imagination today. How do I know that? In the words of Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, it is “...Because the Holy Ghost over the bent world [still] broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.” (*God’s Grandeur*)

And now for what may be the most sobering question of Pentecost. If attitudes are contagious, is your attitude worth catching?

The question is more than just a church billboard. Let it become a prayer. Let us sing in our own hearts the refrain heard around the world today, and in every language on the globe: *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. Come Holy Spirit. And in us and through us, renew the face of the earth. For the last time in this Easter season: Peace!