

Acts 1:1-11\*

Psalm 47:1-2, 5-6, 7, 9\* [Merrill Version] R: "Love invites us to co-creation".

Ephesians 4:1-13\* [Alternative Reading, Eph 1:17-23\*]

Mark 16:9-19\* [Alternative Gospel, Mk 16:15-20]

## Pentecost Mysteries

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### Children's Homily

Today is the feast of the Spirit. The Bible tells us that after Jesus' death, and even after his resurrection, the disciples were afraid, afraid that what happened to Jesus would happen to them. They locked themselves in a room. After 50 days of being locked in, they experienced the spirit. That changed them. They came out and began to tell other people what they learned from Jesus.

In Hebrew, the word for spirit is Ru'ah. Can you say Ru'ah? Try again. Ru'ah is feminine.

In Greek the word for spirit is pneuma. Can you say the word pneuma? It's not masculine or feminine.

Why do the Hebrew and Greek words matter to us? Because the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek!

Ru'ah and Pneuma mean many things:

- (1) Breath. The word for breath and spirit may be the same because we need breath to live.
- (2) Breeze or the movement of air. A breeze is a gentle wind.
- (3) Wind. A strong movement of the air which can actually move very heavy things.
- (4) Spirit. The part of plants, creatures and people that makes us alive.

Breath, breeze, wind, spirit: we can't see these things with our eyes, or catch them with our hands; but we see our chest move when we take a breath, leaves move in a breeze, our hats blow off in a wind, and we can feel the Spirit moving inside.

Spirit is creative. It makes us feel alive. It gives us energy to do things we think we can't do. It makes something from nothing. Because spirit is creative, we say that God is spirit.

At the very beginning of the Bible, it says that when God created our planet, the earth had no shape; there was darkness and deep waters, and God's Ru'ah, Spirit, breath, breeze, wind, moved over the waters to begin creation.

When we experience the spirit, we share in God's life. God is in us. We experience God's spirit when we feel joy, love, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, and gentleness.

This week, pay attention to your feelings. When you feel joy, love for someone, loved by someone, when you feel safe and at peace, remember that you are experiencing God's spirit.

### Adult Homily

The concept of God as spirit was central to ancient Israelite thought and is key in Christian experience and thought.

As modern believers move from the Biblical, paleolithic description of creation to an evolutionary understanding of the origin and continuous unfolding of the cosmos, the importance of God as spirit grows. God as spirit is consistent with an evolutionary universe. Contemporary scientists tell us that matter and spirit are the same reality, even though they seem separate. The spirit *is* incarnate, not only in Jesus, but in all matter.

Judy Cannato writes in her book, Field of Compassion, that spirit creates, does something new, surprises us with leaps in material evolution and in human consciousness. She argues that matter has always evolved by and toward spirit. The presence of spirit in creation pressures life to evolve and enables humans to engage in self-transcendence. Spirit is the Incomprehensible Holy Mystery of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

For scientist, Dr. Denis Edwards, creation began with the Big Bang 13 ½ billion years ago. Our earliest ancestors emerged only 7-5 million years ago. The entire

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<sup>1</sup> Cannato, Judy. Field of Compassion. Notre Dame, Ind.: Soren Books, 2010, pp. 46-53.

history of creation is the evolution of matter in which life becomes ever more conscious or spirit-filled.<sup>2</sup> Edwards believes that, with the evolution of the human, a quantum leap in consciousness occurred. Spirit and matter came together in the human. Note that whether spirit and matter come together in non-human life forms is debated.

Karl Rahner, Jesuit and internationally renowned systematic theologian, a leader at Vatican II, spoke of a “single Creator of the entire cosmos, who remains present to every part of the cosmos, sustaining and empowering its ongoing life and development.”<sup>3</sup> For Rahner, matter is a condition that allows us to experience “the other” immediately in time and space; but there is unity between matter and spirit.

Rahner described spirit as being conscious of and present to one’s own being while “having a sense of the absolute reality or mystery at the heart of matter...”<sup>4</sup>, a process bigger than ourselves which includes the possibility of transcendence. Spirit is not something we possess. It possesses us. When we experience spirit, we are drawn into infinite mystery. Consciousness enables access to spirit.

As our capacity for self-reflection evolved, so did our capacity to reflect on experiences of spirit. Our concept of God, therefore, evolves.<sup>5</sup> For Rahner, the human capacity for spirit is evident in our desire to know and understand, our capacity to love, imagination, and our capacity to make choices, which we call freedom. Together, these gifts result in the human capacity for self-transcendence, individually and as a species. Rahner argues that spirit and matter have more in common than not.<sup>6</sup> Matter and spirit are elements of a fundamental wholeness. The more we mature as individuals and evolve as a species, the more aware of spirit we become. Because humans have the capacity to access incomprehensible holy mystery, we can participate in our own evolution.

The new cosmology provides a different framework for Pentecost. Jesus’ followers, gathered in the upper room, experienced collective transcendence, a

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<sup>2</sup> Cannato, Judy. Field of Compassion. Notre Dame, Ind.: Soren Books, 2010, pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Id. at p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Cannato, Field of Compassion, pp. 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> Cannato, Field of Compassion, p. 51.

collective leap in consciousness which transformed their understanding of everything, including God. From their experience, the church was born.

Pentecost reminds us that our job is not to cling to the church in its current form, but to access the transcendence available in the experience of spirit as the disciples did; to ever more fully access incomprehensible holy mystery; to experience the oneness of matter and spirit; to leap into unitive consciousness. Pentecost calls us to consciously pursue the growth of awareness and, thereby, participate in personal and collective evolution. On Pentecost, and every day when we access spirit, we evolve to become more fully human.