



June 7, 2019

Greetings to you.

Have you ever been given a gift and you really didn't know exactly what to do with it? Or you received a gift that you knew was going to require a lot of work and you were not sure you wanted to undertake that commitment? I have been in both situations. When I retired, I was given a series of water colour painting lessons. I was delighted by the generosity of the gift, but what to do next? I decided that I would try this new adventure. I purchased paints, brushes, pencils, erasers, two blocks of paper, tape. And I signed up for the lessons, despite concern about the time commitment, and my own serious lack of talent in the area. It was scary, quite overwhelming in fact. Nevertheless, through the ups and downs of many lessons, I have had

many surprises. I was welcomed into the group. I have wonderful new friends. I love mixing the colours. Success does not mean having the perfect painting. Especially, it does not matter what my paintings look like compared with other peoples' paintings!

That example is my own meandering thought about God's gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. After the surprise and joy of the resurrection of Jesus, the apostles and the other disciples of Jesus learned many new lessons from Him. Jesus intended to leave His disciples a summary of His teachings that they would understand. Also, Jesus gave them a new commandment. All disciples of Jesus were and are still commanded to love as Jesus loved. To love God, certainly, but to love all other people. This is not always easy. Jesus did not command us to "like" everybody, but to love all people, to want the best for them. This was new and frightening, overwhelming for the followers of Jesus. How could they possibly accomplish this new way of life bereft of their beloved Teacher?

Jesus reminded them that He had promised them that they would never be left alone. He was about to leave them in His earthly form, but on a deeper level, Jesus always would be with them, and us, in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' departure would make way for an even deeper intimacy. Jesus departs from His followers in the flesh, so He can dwell with us in a deeper way in the Spirit.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is a gift from God. In that gift, God gave humanity the gift of the Church. The Holy Spirit will guide and empower this new

community as they grow into the church, a community who will go on to do even “greater works” than Jesus did Himself. We are still growing into that gift! In our ministry of love, Jesus wants us to have a profound sense of confidence, equanimity, and peace.

Part of God’s gift to us is the ministry of love with which we are all entrusted. That was a tall order for the disciples in the first century and it remains so for us in the twenty-first century – to love others the same way Jesus loves us. Jesus loves us just as we are, and through his love we become better than we ever imagined.

It matters deeply to our credibility as Christians whether we love each other, the people other faiths or no faith, and even love those it may be difficult to love. People are trying to decide if God who is at the centre of our lives is the kind of God that they would want at the centre of their lives.

What matters is not *how* we think about God but the *way* we love God. We love God by loving all people, by seeking justice, by being merciful, and by working toward that for which we pray. All-inclusive love is the hope of the world. God loves everyone everywhere without exception.

That is what Christian ministry is all about: being able to love others as God loves us – with a wide embrace for all! This is a gift we have to consider individually and as a community of faith. We have to decide whether and how to use the gift. It is entrusted to us to be used. We don’t even have to buy the paints and brushes.

God of love,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
and may the gifts of your Spirit equip us
to love and serve you in the world You have created,
now and always. Amen.

With love and prayers for wonderful summer of restoration and delight.

Joan.

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