

**HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE HOLEY SPIRIT?
SUNDAY, MAY 20, 2018
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Here I am again on a Sunday morning in May – Pentecost, as it happens to be, and as it was last year when I spoke. It is an honor to be sharing with you in this amazing celebration of the Holy Spirit.

We don't hear much about the Holy Spi9rit from the pulpit during the course of the year. We hear a lot about Jesus, rarely the Holy Spirit or its presence. But that presence is in each one of us and allows us to be with, to touch, and to know God. That presence is what inspires us to compassion, to be with the poor in spirit, the homeless, the sick, the struggling. That presence of the Holy Spirit inspires us to reach out beyond our comfort zone to those who think differently, to those who look to be different from us, to those who pray differently than we do, to those who challenge us with their views or belief. And, it is that presence of the Holy Spirit in us which provides comfort not only to others, but to ourselves when we have experienced loos or have become lost ourselves. And, there is another element to the Holy Spirit – laughter, joy and gratitude. If we are open to it, we will feel that presence in moments of great delight and thanksgiving.

Every Sunday we sing the Gloria Patri – “Glory Be To The Father And To The Son And To The Holy Ghost....” We know the Holy Ghost (aka, the Holy Spirit) is part of the Trinity. So? What part??? We “get God and Jesus, but the Holy Ghost or Spirit? No way. No wonder many pastors across denominations find the subject of the Trinity the hardest to preach about on a Sunday morning. Well, I surely am not going to delve into that. But, as one who passionate about the Holy Spirit, I will pray for guidance and dive right into the third part of the Trinity. So, what or who is the Holy Spirit anyway?

There are references to the Holy Spirit in Scripture. This morning's wonderful reading from Ezekiel speaks of the Spirit as the breath of life, the one who breathes life into dead bones. I love that image. No wonder breath appears so often in Scripture and in religious practices.

I, personally, had an encounter with the Holy Spirit as breath of life. A friend and I were climbing Long's Peak many years ago now. We were up at 1am and left the trailhead sometime later. By 8am we had reached the Boulder Field at about 12,000 feet. My companion remained there while I climbed the remaining 2,000 feet on my own. I passed through the Keyhole and was well on my way. I was making my way through a section of rocks and so was bending over to use my hands as well as my feet when all of a sudden I froze. I mean I could not move my hands nor my feet. I felt, literally, paralyzed. In the midst of this panic attack I wondered, in a detached way, how I would get down as no one was around. Then I heard a voice and the voice said, “Breathe.” As I took a breath, y hand moved up to the next rock. I mean it just moved as I breathed. I marveled at how easy it was. From there I made it on up to the peak and expressed my deep gratitude to that voice that gently reminded me to breath in the breath of life. To this day, I still am in awe and full of wonder at that experience of my bones moving at the instigation of the Holy Spirit, the breath of life. Right on, Ezekiel!

Elsewhere in Scripture, specifically in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as Helper. More pointedly, Jesus spoke to his gathered disciples in the upper room and told them he would send One to be with them after he was gone to be with the Father. Paul has a lot to say about the Holy Spirit in Romans. It is in you and in me if one “lives not by your natural inclinations but by the spirit, since the spirit of God has made a home in you.” (Romans 8:9-10)

Paul further speaks of the Holy Spirit as Helper and Intercessor and as God's guide in you and in me leading each of us. (Romans 8:26-38) In Actos (2:1-21), Paul describes the Holy Spirit as strong wind blowing and filling the house where the disciples and believers were gathered. They saw what looked like tongues of fire spreading out and touching each person, and they spoke in tongues.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul says the Holy Spirit is the giver of God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:10-12) and he notes, "Whoever does not have the spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God's Spirit." And what are those gifts? Paul tells us (1 Corinthians 12:1-2). They are: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healer, miracles, prophesy or speaking God's message, discernment, speaking in tongues, and the interpreting what has been spoken of in tongues.

So, we know the spiritual person has the Holy Spirit within him or her. And, spirituality is that discovery of the Holy Spirit within the self which is connected to God, and trusting the leading of God's Spirit in our lives with all the comfort, help, wisdom, healing, compassion, joy and delight that God offers through His Spirit.

Still, we cannot see or touch the Holy Spirit, just as we cannot see or touch the wind, but we can see the effects of the wind by the quaking of the leaves and bending of tree limbs. We can feel the movement of air through our hands even if we cannot hold onto it.

We know that Spirit of God by its effects. These effects are often what we call "moments of grace," pure gifts as those acquainted with the Holy Spirit would note – the Holy Spirit at work within and through me, within and through you, within and through all of us.

Think of those moments when something just slipped out of your mouth and touches someone else in a profound, loving and compassionate way. You wonder where those words came from and feel wonder at their effect. Yup, the Holy Spirit at work. Or times when you have been angry, depressed or hurt. You feel helpless as you wander lost in your suffering. Then something happens – you read a passage in a spiritual book or one of crazy Ruth's poems in Louise Penny's Inspector Gamache mystery series, or you visit someone "shut-in" and see their face light up with a radiant glow because you are there, or someone says something to in City Market, and you hold your new grand-baby in your arms, or you hear Teresa play something that transports you elsewhere and you feel a shift in yourself. Something changes and everything looks different to you. That is the Holy Spirit at work.

Our journey group met this Thursday. We shared our experiences of presence. By the end we were full of laughter and delight. As we embraced for a parting group hug, we found ourselves laughing. As we did so, we could fee/hear laughter that was more than ours surround and embrace us. What a graced moment that was!

The Holy Spirit is not about piety or religiosity. It is about life lived – lived to the fullest; lived with all the joy and the pain that makes up life from birth to death.

I don't have a movie in mind to recommend to you this summer, but I do have a book, or a rather a series of books. They are Louise Penny's Inspector Gamach mystery series set in Three Pins – a village south of Montreal and just north of the Vermont border. It is not on any map (neither Google maps nor your GPS will help you). It seems you have to get lost to find it. The characters are real people who become your friends and you soon realize through all the real life events that happen, there is something intangible at work in, through, and amongst the people. Yes you can find the Holy Spirit at

work in a mystery series. If you have not yet visited Three Pine, I highly recommend you do so this summer.

We don't speak often of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is the only time we really do. But whether we speak of it or not, believe me, the Holy Spirit is at work in and through each of us. The Holy Spirit is alive and at work not only in Three Pines, but in and through the Church community. Our Church community – you and me. For me, it was palpable upon my return from Arizona as the breath of life. As Ezekiel described it: "Breath entered the bodies, and they came to life and stood up." New life breathed into our old bones. Now, that is cause for celebration, don't you think? Worthy of song and dance!!! The real presence of the Holy Spirit here today – in you, in me, in all of us. So let's go forth and celebrate! Amen.