

Sacred Spirit, Our Spirit

Flowing Spirit, living water, Mother of creation: refresh our hearts, inspire our gifts, indwell our gathering and make us a sign of all the world's vocation to communion with you; through Jesus Christ, who quenches our thirst. Amen.

A Collect for the Day of Pentecost, Prayers for an Inclusive Church

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts of the Apostles 2:1-21; Psalm 104: 25-35, 37; John 7:37-39

JUNE 4, 2017

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN., PRIEST AND RECTOR

THE GOSPEL READING: JOHN 7:37-39

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified

The last time we were here together on a Sunday morning was February 26, the last Sunday after the Epiphany, anticipating Ash Wednesday in the next week and the beginning of my three-month sabbatical on Ash Wednesday. Now the seasons of Lent and Easter have passed, as has my sabbatical, and we gather on the Day of Pentecost, the day most associated with the sacred gift of Holy Spirit given to the people of earth.

First of all, let me tell you of my gratitude for the days of my sabbatical. It was an enormous privilege and held many

opportunities and gifts – so many that it is difficult to recall or relate them all in detail. There were many surprises and unexpected gifts that unfolded in the midst of these days away from St. Mark's. So I'm grateful for what the experience of the sabbatical has been and will continue to reveal and I'm also grateful beyond words for all that all of you, particularly our parish leadership and staff members have done to assure the continued life and vitality of our faith community in my absence. The truth is, the work of ministry here mostly comes from people other than me; what St. Mark's is and does is

continually a mutual endeavor. And I'm grateful for what my clergy colleagues brought to you, The Rev. Michael Corrigan and The Rev. Paul Collins especially and The Rev. Jim Sprague a couple of weeks ago. We are fortunate, indeed – beyond the telling - to have these companions near us. Not as apparent as a part of Michael and Paul being here was the generous support of The Rev. Christine McSpadden, Rector of Trinity, Santa Barbara and The Rev. Aimee Delavant, Rector of All Saints', Montecito where Michael and Paul typically assist, who released them from their work in those parishes and encouraged them to be at St. Mark's these past months.

Every aspect of my sabbatical was a gift. Gift after gift after gift – like the continual gift of the Spirit, that is a gift that harbors many gifts....

Some may know that the pace of life leading in to March 1 was such that I did very little planning of what I would do during the time; and I became content with open space and trusting whatever would emerge or not. I had a few ideas of what I might seek out, but very few firm plans.

One of the earliest gifts that set the tone for the whole time was an invitation from Frances Schultz to join a group of friends who were taking a few days walk on the

Camino de Santiago in Spain. A huge opportunity in itself, it was even more profound in that walking the Camino was something I had always wanted to do, but couldn't see how I would do it.

Truth be told, I was in my own way about the prospect. As you may know, to walk the whole Camino from start to finish requires a lot of planning and a lot of time – typically more than a month – as many as three months. And in my understanding of myself, I couldn't see any other way of approaching it, despite the fact that many people walk for a week, a couple of weeks, a day – whatever time they have and whatever amount of energy they have. That had never crossed my mind... and, as a result, I likely would have never experienced the wonder of that ancient pilgrimage route.

But with Frances' invitation (a call from outside myself), I was able to receive a new possibility and a possibility that continues to open up and out on new perspectives, new vistas of life, generally, and my own life.

Robert Mullen is a Camino pilgrim and the author of *The Call of the Camino: Myths, Legends and Pilgrim Stories*. Mullen writes of the experience of this pilgrimage: "The Camino finds you out. The Camino will provide what you need. The Camino will heal you

if you let it. And most intriguing of all, the true Camino begins only when you reach the end."

As it unfolded, the entire of my sabbatical was a pilgrimage. While in Europe to walk the Camino with Frances and friends, I visited longtime friends in England for Holy Week – an invitation that came on the same day as the invitation from Frances to walk the Camino – where we participated in the liturgies of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil at St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in London. They had also planned visits to four art exhibits and a play in the West End – all of which built on the themes of Holy Week and Easter. I was also able to visit Barcelona and Paris on my way to Santiago and coming back – pure, unanticipated gift in two places of profound beauty.

Once back to the U.S. Bill and I embarked on a long "road trip pilgrimage" that was a review of many aspects of our lives, time with family, friends, colleagues, as well as experiencing some new places – and, of course, all of these places as they are now, not as they were when we were there before. If you can imagine traveling more than 6,000 miles and never encountering traffic or so much as a flat tire, you'll have an idea what a magical experience it was to move through these recent days that took

us to 23 states and the District of Columbia....

Like the Camino is Spain, my sense about this whole sabbatical journey is "the true Camino begins only when you reach the end."

The one other detail I'll offer for the moment is that I was able to be present in worship somewhere every Sunday and I took the opportunity to look in on as many churches, especially Episcopal churches, everywhere I could. Being able to just show up for church as an eye-opening experience. I first experienced this miracle here in our area – at Trinity, Santa Barbara and at St. Michael's in Isla Vista – and what a gift! There were wonders in other places as well – and a couple of experiences that left me wondering how on earth those churches were still open – or how long they would be... but all valuable experiences that will inform some of our future days together....

In the middle of the reading from Acts that we heard this morning, describing the experience of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost we find: "All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'"

God's presence in reality, as reality – as the gift of the Holy Spirit that does, in fact, permeate all

actual life and our lives, [the Holy Spirit] is something we can attend and awaken to, can be both amazing and perplexing at once, as recognized by our ancient forbearers, and it can also be something we can sneer at – as then, so now.

Likely we will, at times, do both, we will approach our own daily journeys, our personal and communal pilgrimage days with amazement, with perplexity, and occasionally, with sneering. In time, I pray we more and more recognize and embrace the gift of our movement with and among one another and in the world that God so loves, as people living in one Spirit that is Divine gift.

In our journey in the whole, large, real world, in and with this gift of God's Spirit in us here and now, like the Camino, our pilgrimage life will find us out, will provide what we need and will heal us if we let it.



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