

A Pentecost Reflection

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Texts: Acts 2: 1-17

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room. Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as she enabled them.

Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being spoken. They were amazed and astonished: "Surely all of these people speaking are Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome--all Jews, or converts to Judaism--Cretans and Arabs, too; we hear them preaching, each in our own language, about the marvels of God!"

All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, "What does this mean?" But others said mockingly, "They've drunk too much new wine."

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: "Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! These people are not drunk as you think--it's only nine o'clock in the morning! No, it's what Joel the prophet spoke of:

*'In the days to come--
It is our God who speaks--
I will pour out my Spirit
On all humankind.
Your [children] will prophesy,
Your young people will see visions,
And your elders will dream dreams.'*

Today genuinely excites me. I am all fired up by this incredible music and sacred movement ... surrounded by flare... The visible flare on our clothes and the flare that shines in our souls.

I invited us as a community to wear flare – whatever that may be – maybe it is a sequin dress! Or funky pajamas!

And to just have fun with it! To celebrate the sparkly and fiery Holy Spirit that is descending upon us now. That is moving through all of us. The Holy Spirit that is yes, present in our tongues, our speech – like our passage today reminds us -- AND in our sight (not what we see with our eyes, but with our hearts) AND in our hands that create and love.

AND even if our flare.

Your flare – whether it is something that is making you smile or laugh, whether it is something that you hold dear... is holy flare. It is a reminder that your style, personality, is beautiful. For all of it – all of us - are God's beloved and sacred creation.

Wearing flare is reminding me of something that I have been thinking about this past year, which is – how do we have fun with God? I noticed in my time at Divinity school, how serious I was. No one told me I had to be serious. It just naturally happened.

Yes, I did fun things outside of classes, but when I opened my books, when my fingers touched the keyboard – I was serious. Digging deep within myself, grappling with theologies, the injustices in this world – and yes, all the seriousness I was carrying made sense.

This seriousness was also very much present in my prayers. I shared with God my burdens and worries. I asked for help. To help me open my heart wider. To help me listen more in social justice work.

Again – that seriousness makes sense, too. And still does.

Up until this point (in my life generally) my religious formation and my relationship with God has mostly been a serious one. I share the silly, sassy, goofy, fiery sides of me with loved ones, with friends, with all of you -but not so much with God.

As like most things we have talked about this year... I think this is another both/and. I need that serious part of my relationship with God – to be really open and vulnerable - AND...What would happen if I laughed with God? Shared my puny dad jokes in my prayers?

Like... God, "Where do you learn to make a banana split?" "Sundae school."

Dan started his Easter sermon talking about laughter - and he and Sarah shared a video clip of some of our young ones sharing their favorite jokes. And that was awesome.

What would happen if I danced with God in my living room?

This question led me to create a faith and life group called Dancing with God this past fall. There was a very fun group of us that got together on a few Friday afternoons and just danced. No real agendas except a playlist and some conversation. Here we were on Zoom, moving and grooving on our Zoom boxes.

In our gatherings, I shared some of my experiences I have had with movement – how it has helped me move out of my intellectual head space, and how sometimes I feel like my body knows more about me in a given moment than my brain... Like, I may not even be fully aware of how stressed I am until I take a moment to realize all of this tension in my shoulders and neck.

And sometimes, I just don't have words. Movement gives me language in those moments of prayer when words do not seem like enough.

And then there are times when movement helps me incorporate more genuine fun into my spiritual life.

To also let that silly, goofy, creative side of me out...

and so, I have discovered that for me, movement is helping me hold on to this serious side and explore this fun side....

This makes sense to me because growing up, I loved dancing. It was always a big part of my life -as far back as I can remember. My mother reminds me how she would try to put me in the car seat as a toddler and all I would want to do was unbuckle my seatbelt, stand up and dance to this 90s pop song, "you are rocking the boat."

To this day when I am sitting at a red light and jamming music in the car, I need to remind myself to not unbuckle.

In our Dancing with God group this past fall, I also shared some wisdom I learned from a brother at the episcopal monastery in Cambridge, which was – prayers can be playful. our spiritual life can be playful.

As a kid, that feels easy to do– we have that imagination. Playing comes so naturally and then as we grow-up we tend to lose most of it somewhere along the way.

But I don't think it is actually lost. I believe it is somewhere within all of us. For me, it is dance and movement that have helped me begin to find that imagination again.

I let my arms (sometimes even just my hands) make shapes and create new shapes... move fast or slow....move my feet....

And sometimes I turn on some music in the kitchen and just boogie my heart out.

As a kid, I remember lying down on my bed, listening to music, closing my eyes and imagining myself dancing. And sometimes I did this without music at all.

And that is why when I invite us into an embodied prayer or practice, I welcome you to close your eyes, if that feels more genuine or comfortable. Because for me, that has been just as powerful as physically moving.

Movement has helped me share more of myself with God. Not just the serious side.

It has helped me realize that I can have fun with God. I can be playful. And that - that is just as important. It has added a whole new dimension to my spiritual life. I can't describe exactly how. I do not have the words quite yet. Maybe someday I will.

For now, I invite you to ask yourself - what makes you smile? What do we like to do for fun? Maybe it is dancing, maybe it is not. Maybe it is singing, knitting, drawing, cooking... and go do it and share that fun you experience with God.

I believe God wants to smile and laugh with us. God, the life-giving source of imagination, creation, and joy itself.

I believe God wants to have fun with us, too.

Amen.

