

Pentecost. 09

One of you told me recently that she cries when she hears Becky sing the Pentecost sequence. So, in the hope that I can make more of you share her response, let me go through its words with you.

Come, Holy Spirit, send forth your divine light.

Come, Father of the Poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of our hearts.

You are the best of consolers, you are the sweet guest of our souls.

You are sweet refreshment.

You are rest in the midst of our labors, You are quiet in the midst of turmoil, you are comfort in our grief.

O most blessed light, fill the inmost hearts of your faithful ones.

Without your light there is nothing in us which is not harmful.

Wash what is unclean in us, water what is dry in us, heal what is wounded in us.

Bend what is rigid in us, warm what is frigid in us, straighten what is crooked in us.

Give to your faithful ones who trust in you your sevenfold gifts.

Give us the rewards of a virtuous life, give us a safe departure from life here, give us eternal joy.

Father of the poor. I suppose we who deal with our guests on Thursdays should think of this phrase when we see these guests. Pater pauperum. Of course we are all poor in different ways. So we should include ourselves in this group.

If you had to summarize the general impression which all the phrases in this medieval hymn give us of the Holy Spirit, what would you say? My impression is that the hymn is saying that the Holy Spirit is the lotion of our lives, the strength which makes it possible for us to weather the storms of life, the anchor of our lives.

When we think of the Spirit, we perhaps think of the atmosphere of our lives, the air we breathe. That is of course the meaning of the Latin word spirit. It means to breathe. Just as air surrounds us, so too does the Holy Spirit. And we know when the air or spirit which surrounds us or others is holy or unholy. When the air is peaceful and patient, it is the Holy Spirit; when it is angry and violent, it is an unholy spirit. So let us attempt to live in the peace and patience of the Holy Spirit.

In our wired world where everyone is in constant contact, maybe a few moments of rest would help to establish our contact with the

Holy Spirit. In our desperate world where people are worried about the next meal and a roof over their heads, maybe a moment of prayer would help to establish our contact with the Holy Spirit. In our world where even children and young people lose hope, maybe our own living in the Spirit would help us to help them.

One of you sent me a beautiful story that runs in this vein. A teacher in New York decided to tell her graduating class that each of them had made a difference to her. She presented each of them with a ribbon which read, "Who I am Makes a Difference." Then she gave them three more ribbons and asked them to do for someone else what she had done for them. One boy went to a junior executive in a nearby company and did that. The junior executive went to his boss, a real grouch, gave him a ribbon and told him that he had made a difference in his life and that he admired him for his creative genius. Then he asked the boss to do the same for someone else, telling him that the teenager who had given him the ribbon was doing a school project to see how people were affected by getting a ribbon. That night the boss went home and sat down with his 14 year-old son and said to him: "The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office, and one of my employees came in and told me he admired me, and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine! He thinks I am

a creative genius! Then he put a blue ribbon on me that says, ‘Who I Am Makes a Difference.’ He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about who I would honor with this ribbon, and I thought about you. I want to honor you. My days are hectic and when I come home, I don’t pay a lot of attention to you. I yell at you for not getting good grades and for your messy bedroom. Somehow, tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You’re a great kid, and I love you.” The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he couldn’t stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, “Dad, earlier tonight I sat in my room and wrote a letter to you and Mom, explaining why I had taken my life, and I asked you to forgive me. I was going to commit suicide tonight after you were asleep. I just didn’t think that you cared at all. The letter is upstairs. I don’t think I’ll need it after all.” His father walked upstairs and found a heartfelt letter full of anguish and pain. The boss went back to work a changed man. He was no longer a grouch, but made sure to let all of his employees know that they made a difference.

May the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit make us aware of how important we are and what a difference we can make in the lives of others!