

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
May 24, 2026 - Pentecost Sunday (A)
Given at Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

Acts 2: 1-21; Psalm 104: 25-35,37; 1 Cor 12: 3b-13; John 20: 19-23

**“I will pour out my Spirit upon every kind of people:
your sons and daughters will prophesy; and your young men shall see visions and your old
men shall dream dreams...” †**

Happy Birthday Church! I love Pentecost- the celebration of the power of the Spirit here among us! Peter’s quote from the prophet Joel: “and your young men shall see visions,” is dear to my heart. It’s the title of a book my mother gave to me when I was a teenager. Written by the Roman priest and sociologist, Andrew Greeley— who’s known for his many trashy novels, but also for some beautiful works like this one—it’s a series of letters to a young man, challenging him to follow the Spirit and pursue Christian virtue. It says a lot about discernment and ministry.

Once again, that one line, “and your young men shall see visions,” haunted me for most of my life. It haunted me until I finally accepted the call I had avoided for so long, to become a priest. It speaks to me of the tremendous power of the Spirit to affect our lives, to transform our lives, to lead us to become the people we are meant to be.

There’s no doubt that the Spirit leads us *all* to where we are supposed to be. It’s how I was blessed to be trained as a physician, to have been able to teach at a great university and medical school for years, and then blessed venture here to CT from Florida, to continue the same. It’s also how I came to understand I was meant to be a priest, and how I’m able to be here now to lead you in prayer at Christ Church Quaker Farms! The Spirit is how all of us are blessed to be with each other, via the wonders of technology online or here in person.

This morning we celebrate the ‘pouring out’ of that Spirit—God’s Spirit. Pentecost is the liturgical celebration of the coming of the 3rd Person of the Holy Trinity to humanity, to give strength and support to the disciples... to the Church.

For a moment, consider the story historically. Think about the coming of the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. It happened at a pivotal moment in a community on the threshold. This early community was threatened by the unexpected loss (death) of its leader, challenged by the stories and rumors of his resurrection. There was great confusion about who was in charge, and what was going to happen... *Sounds a bit like the restoration of our parish hall!* And the story tells us— we heard it today— that the Holy Spirit came and the community was *transformed*. Similar to those the ancient tales of the Phoenix, a new community was born out of the ashes of despair, through flames of fire; it was transformed, it was reborn. It experienced new birth in the Spirit. Hence, *today* is considered the birthday of the Church.

The ancient Jewish tradition about the Spirit of God is that the Spirit reveals God’s truth to us, *and* the Spirit also enables us to understand that truth. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, came at a time when Jesus was no longer humanly present to his disciples, to give them peace. And the Holy Spirit *still* comes today to give *us* peace. The Spirit comes to teach us how to find God

present in our daily lives, to experience the world in the way Jesus taught us. The Spirit of Truth speaks to our hearts, it penetrates our being, and somehow allows us to know we are never alone. God loves each of us so much that the Holy Spirit was sent into our lives to guide us, to transform us, and to calm us, telling us that God will *always* be present to us. How awesome! The Spirit came and revealed to us God's presence, God is with us! Therefore, as I've mentioned the last few weeks, none of us is alone.

Long ago, I learned a simple prayer to start each day (taught to me by an 8-year-old, who was the son of a member of an adult prayer class I was teaching in Miami):

“Dear God, help me to remember,
nothing can happen to me today
that you and I can't handle together.”

It still gets me... It's so very important for me to remember this prayer, in the midst of the turmoil I face every day, when I feel stress at home or at work, to remind me, the Holy Spirit is here, right now!

It's vital for all of us to understand this, especially as we experience the struggles, confusion, inequality, and unfairness of our broken world. We've lost loved ones from illness, violence, and apathy... we face recurring debates about policy and politics and violence and wars throughout the world... we see racism and hatred flourishing all around us... and there seem to be so many divisions that have led to all this. It's hard not to be bitter and afraid. Amid these struggles, we must acknowledge God's presence, as we experience the change and uncertainty resulting from transitions within our society, our workplaces, within our parish, and around the world! Remember that prayer— nothing can happen that the Spirit and we, the Church, cannot handle together.

We are so loved by God, so precious to God, that God never left us. The Spirit was sent and came to us, so that we would never be alone. I find that humbling, comforting, and even empowering. It gives me the power to change the focus of my vocation and make beneficial changes in my life! As you begin new ventures and face the new challenges of discerning what kind of people you want to become... what kind of parish and community of God you will become in this difficult world... Remember, nothing will happen that the Spirit and you can't handle together. Our God has promised, “I will pour out my spirit upon every kind of people...”

That's the miracle of Pentecost:

Nothing can happen to me, that the Spirit and I cannot handle together...

Nothing can happen to you, that the Spirit and you cannot handle together... and,

Nothing can happen to us, that the Spirit and we cannot handle together! †