

Pentecost – Fr. Val Handwerker

June 4, 2017

Cathedral

5:00 and Noon

Theme: Seeing with the vision of Pentecost

We heard this description from the Acts of the Apostles: **“And suddenly...a noise like a strong driving wind...filled the entire house in which they were.”**

That happened at that first Pentecost. It also happened last Saturday night about 11:00 p.m.—**“a strong driving wind”** which shook midtown mightily. The bedrooms for Father Jose Cruz and myself are on the second floor, and just before Sunday Mass here, Father Jose Cruz voiced what I feared as that storm swept through midtown: “I thought the wind was going to peel off the roof!”

On the first Easter night, we heard the Risen Jesus usher in Pentecost in a calmer fashion, but just as powerful: **“Jesus breathed on the disciples and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”**

“Come, Holy Spirit, come!...Shed a ray of light divine!”—so we prayed in the ancient Pentecost song. Oh, there are different spiritual gifts, but they all build up the body.

A parishioner, Dr. Victor Santana, has been a pediatric oncologist on the front lines of care at St. Jude’s Hospital for thirty-year years. Recently he told me about an experience which touched his soul deeply. He has given me permission to share it. A patient of Dr. Santana for thirteen years died recently just before her fifteenth birthday. She had been a devout Catholic. About the age of two, she was diagnosed with cancer of the eyes, and she became a patient at St. Jude’s. Her eyes were removed, she thereby becoming blind. For eight years she was cancer free. Then, a malignancy was found in her leg. Part of her leg was amputated. Then, more recently cancer was found elsewhere in her body, and last month she died at St. Jude’s.

“Come, Holy Spirit, come!...Shed a ray of light divine!”

Dr. Santana joined with the teenager's parents and other family as they kept vigil at her bedside prior to her death. He stood there, and at one point in the vigil Dr. Santana realized something: All through her life, this young girl—although physically blind—always *saw* the good in other people. She built up all those around her by seeing good in each of them. Indeed, this young girl could have groused that she had been handed a raw deal in life: she could have been angry, jealous of the “good life” other healthy folks had. As Dr. Santana kept vigil with her dying patient, he knew the Spirit of God had led her to live a rich life which could truly *see* the good in people. She had built up the body.

**“Come, Holy Spirit, come!...Shed a ray of light divine!
Shine within these hearts of yours, and our inmost being fill!”**

On that first Easter night, as we heard in St. John's Gospel, the doors were locked where the disciples were. Three days earlier their Master, their Teacher, had been tortured and brutally put to death. The doors were locked, for they only saw fear. They only saw defeat...and the absence of the crucified Jesus.

Then, friends, the Risen Jesus suddenly in their midst *breathed* on them. And his Spirit transformed them. They could truly *see* then. They could see hope, and a future, and they experienced the rest of their lives that, in his Holy Spirit, the Risen Jesus was just as present within and among them, as he was when he walked with them in his earthly ministry. Yes, Jesus breathed on them, and that gift of Pentecost unleashed a storm of power.

It's the same gift promised *us* this Pentecost. Oh, we can grouse because we resent we don't have what others have. Or, we can welcome the Spirit of Pentecost to transform us. Together, then, *we* can see differently, and show Jesus' presence in the service of our lives.

“Come, Holy Spirit, come!...Shed a ray of light divine!”