

Prayer: Holy Spirit, who came as wind and flames of fire, fan into life the gifts and abilities of people everywhere; unite us in a creative love that includes others, celebrates differences, builds your church and brings you glory. Amen

Catherine the Great, in the 18th century said: "A great wind is blowing, and that gives you either imagination or a headache." I have to admit that I loved this applied to the Holy Spirit of God. On this day in our faith life THE great wind blew in spectacular fashion but as we heard from our Numbers reading it was not the first time it blew over people – and as we know in our lives it was not the last!

For our contemplation today we have been given the wonderfully rich passage from the life of the ancient Hebrews. They had escaped from slavery in Egypt; they had been wandering and got to the grumpy stage where they didn't actually want their problems to be solved. How can I say that? 1 Eg: They grumbled that Moses (God) had brought them out of Egypt to starve – so every morning Manna was supplied with the occasional supplement of quail like birds... So they complained the diet didn't change.... The headache from managing the problems of the community had grown out of proportion. The workload was way beyond one person's capacity when the excitement of 'leaving' had gone.

So how and what was Moses going to do to block the headache, retain his sanity, hold his people together, **and** keep them moving towards establishing the reality of God's plan? God took the Spirit that was on Moses and share it. "25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders." The seventy all experienced a one off gift of prophecy, as a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. I wonder if we catch a glimpse of God's imagination with the delightful expose that 2 of the chosen 70 had stayed in the 'village camp' and not obeyed the summons to go to the encampment with the Tent of God's Presence.

You can't run from God's call, you know that don't you? I guess ever since humanity was created we've tried one way or another only to have delightful stories like this prove God's imagination is the source of ours! 2 men chosen by their community as leaders stayed away thinking God (Moses) wouldn't notice – but no; in the middle of the village camp they also prophesied!

And captured for us is a glimpse of Moses style of leadership. 1. He is not insecure (jealous) that 2 men didn't obey his summons to come to God's Tent. 2. He has an active imagination – he dreams: '29 But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"

Today is our celebration of the realisation of that dream – through Jesus, the disciples, our faith ancestors, our family, friends – who ever welcomed us into God's family – through all or any of these paths today we celebrate the reality of the Lord putting his Spirit on his people – all of them. A great wind is blowing, and it gives either imagination or a headache – what is your choice?

I think we had examples of both in our Numbers passage – Moses imagination was fired up but the tale-tellers headache only got worse I suspect! Simply because we have the gift of the Holy Spirit poured into our lives does not mean we leave our brains – thinking – intelligence at the door step of our lives. Simply because we have the Holy Spirit does not mean we have to leave 'our-self' behind and become a Jesus clone. **But**, De Laar warns neither is the gift of the Holy Spirit an excuse to "revel in moments of personal bliss or simply an experience that can be enjoyed in some sort of euphoria. Rather, it is a moment which changes everything, in which our lives are equipped and marked for God's reign, and in which our quest to follow Christ is made possible through the gift of the Spirit.

Here, then, is the call of this Day – to open ourselves to God's Spirit, to be empowered and gifted, in order that we may be sent to bring God's life, God's grace and forgiveness and God's empowering

Spirit to all others. Simply because we have the Holy Spirit we are better placed to be - become who we are meant to be, precious, belonging to our Creator and Lord enabled to **share** this gift of **life**. cV

A great wind is blowing that is beyond us to interfere or control, we can inhibit, we can deny, we can ignore, but we can't stop the reality of the presence of the Spirit of God. Sometimes Wind; Breath; Lady Wisdom; Advocate; Word; Fire; dove, Counsellor, we can't stop the Spirit rather we are called through personal experience, to share its presence in our world, community, church, life... Does this line of thinking stir your imagination or give you a headache? Both are good! I am biased towards wanting imagination to dominate our corporate life but admit to *personally* experiencing both when it comes to the Holy Spirit, how about **you**? Cv

Today we celebrate the gift of God's spirit pictured as both individual tongues of fire and a strong wind blowing. It is the day Moses dream turned real, the day Joel prophesied about, Peter spoke about Jesus promised.... Instead of the Spirit of God being for a limited few, and sometimes with a limited ability – on this day the limits were removed, and the boundaries of the gift dissolved. All people – everywhere belong together gathering around the table in the presence of the Lord.

The early Jesus followers really meant all people – Luke's list that Dick read to us wasn't simply a random list. This list of inclusion actually begins with: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" 'Galileans' usually meant 'country bumpkins', uncivilised / lacking education / rough, these people are worthy of God's presence. (J Petty) *"Parthia was Rome's main rival in the region. It was a large empire, occupying most of present-day Iran and Iraq, and also western Pakistan and eastern Turkey. What's more, Rome had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Parthia in 53 BC. General Marcus Licinius Crassus took six Legions into Parthia and promptly got beaten by the much-smaller Parthian army. Crassus literally lost his head, which the King of Parthia thereafter used as a paperweight. Even the Parthians, enemies of Rome, are there on Pentecost."

The Medes are a little murkier. They are mentioned only one time in the Old Testament, and the word appears to have dropped out of use after about 500 BC. The Mede Empire occupied almost the same exact territory as the Parthian Empire mentioned above, only about 600 years earlier. It is believed that the present-day Kurds may be descended from the Medes. Even extinct civilizations--and Kurds!--were there at Pentecost.

The Elamites were also extinct at the time of Pentecost. Their empire was south of the Mede Empire and also earlier. In fact, the Elamites can be identified as early as 2700 BC. (Their major city was Susa, which dates from 4000 BC.) They were conquered by the Persians in 539 BC--another extinct civilization present at Pentecost.

Cyrene was an important Greek city in Libya with a sizeable Jewish minority. When the region passed into Roman control, the Jews began to feel oppressed by the Greek majority and rebelled in AD 73 when Vespasian was Emperor. (This would have been only a decade or so prior to the writing of the book of Acts.) The rebellion was put down by Marcus Turbo, but was exceptionally bloody and left the country severely depopulated. Those persecuted by the Romans were present at Pentecost."

Luke understood the Spirit that blew in on that day so long ago, was for all people: enemies of Rome, extinct civilisations, the persecuted, and the ordinary. Peter understood through Joel that it included sons, daughters, even servants, all belong when Jesus is Lord, God speaks your language and you discover the gift of life.

Imagination or headache – the evidence of a Pentecost Church, is not so much particular gifts or experiences, but the life, grace and service that the Church brings to the world. We are filled with the Spirit not for our own sakes, but for the sake of all whom God loves and calls his own. A.A. Procter, 19th century said: "Dreams grow holy put in action." Imagination or headache? God's wind blows. Amen