

Ever had those moments of doubt or confusion in life? Even fearful moments when you are on uncertain? Be honest, we all have had such moments and we are not alone in this.

We don't know exactly what went on in that upper room in the days after Christ died, but the gospels give us a pretty good idea. We know there was fear—that's why his followers were hiding out. Jesus had been executed; they could easily be next.

Should they pack up and go home—back to their fishing nets and tax-collecting booth? Or should they carry on with their mission? But what exactly was their mission, now that Jesus was gone? And who was in charge? So it was a troubled crew of Christ-followers gathered in that room that day.

I suspect in one shape or another, we have been to that room, but we have Pentecost to show us there is always a way out, the Holy Spirit, who can pass through anything this world may throw into our lives.

The sequence that we heard prior to the gospel is an ancient reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit: wash clean what is sordid, bring to life what is dying, cure what is wounded, loosen what is rigid, warm up what is frozen, straighten what is warped.

This is the Holy Spirit at work deep inside us, taking the broken parts of us and putting them in order, soothing our souls that worry at times just as He did on that first Pentecost.

+A couple of years ago, I met my baby grand-nephew – who was somewhat anxious when being put down at bedtime. But then his mother would put on this contraption that wrapped around his body to bring him comfort and calm. The Holy Spirit, in such a way, is God's comforter – it comes to reassure us.

+I remember taking a test in seminary and did not feel good at all with how it was going. I handed it in with a heavy worried heart. I rested myself in the Holy Spirit. That very eve I got a call from my professor. She had graded my exam first and then had the compulsion to call me, to let me know it all was okay. She had just felt the tug to do so.

If we are open to it, there are many such episodes in our life in which the Holy Spirit is at work just as He was at work in that upper room. We could say on that day a tongue of fire rested on EACH of the disciples.

That is instructive. The fire did not descend only on the Apostles. The fire rested on EACH of the disciples. The previous chapter (Acts 1:15), tells about a hundred and twenty disciples. Apparently all hundred twenty received a tongue of fire.

The tongue of fire that rested on the disciples showed that EACH disciple was empowered by the Holy Spirit –empowered by God.

That's the way it is today too. In the Church today, it isn't only the pastors/bishops or deacons who must be inspired by God. It's all of us. God intends EVERY disciple – you – parent, children, whoever, to do his or her part. All of us have value and God calls EACH of us to a special calling.

God calls EACH of us to fill a niche that no one else can fill—calls EACH of us to do special work that no one else can do. If we sit back and do nothing, our work for Christ will not get done. If we don't do our part, we poke a hole in the fabric of heaven.

+Someone once said, "There are two great moments in a person's life, the moment you were born and the moment you realize why you were born." We are all here for a purpose and that may be very simple, to go out as they did on that Pentecost and be the conduit of the Holy Spirit. On that original Pentecost, we have the birth of the Church, but in each generation the Church continues to be born, by all of its members and I have the facts to back this up.

+Herb Miller is a researcher who studies how churches grow:

- Miller discovered that churches grow, in large measure, because members invite friends to come to church with them.
- He found that people are far more likely to visit a church if invited by a friend or neighbor than if invited by the pastor.
- He found that 70 and 90 percent of the people who join any church come through the influence of a friend or relative.
- He found that, when people visit a church, the most effective way to get them to come again is to have a layperson make contact within 36 hours. The purpose of the visit/contact is simply to acknowledge the visitors, to make them feel welcome, and to answer any questions that they might have.
- Miller found out that having a layperson make the visit was twice as effective as having the pastor do it. If the pastor made the visit, only forty percent of the people would come to church again. However, if a layperson made the visit, eighty-five percent would return. So it's not all on me!

+To be a practicing Catholic in 16th Century England was dangerous because of the hostility of Henry VIII. To shelter a priest, to teach the Catholic faith was considered treason—punishable by death. Saint Margaret Clitherow of Yorkshire was one who pushed back.

This valiant woman was hung in 1586 at the age of 33 for harboring priests and having Mass in her home. She also ran a small, and illegal, school for children in her home. She spent more than 10 years in and out of prison, and finally in March of 1586, a raid on her home found a priest's hiding place in the attic, as well as chalices, vestments and missals.

Margaret was arrested, put into prison and formally charged. The Court found her guilty and sentenced her to death by hanging (she would actually end up being crushed to death). From her prison cell the night before she died, Margaret made a final request.

She left her shoes to her eldest daughter, Anne, who was 12 years old. The message from mother to daughter was clear: "Follow in my footsteps. Carry on the Faith."

That is our calling, to take on the footsteps of those who have gone before us, for the Church to be reborn in every generation, via the Holy Spirit!