

ORDINARY TIME FOR EXTRA-ORDINARY PEOPLE: LEAVING EASTER AND MOVING THROUGH PENTECOST WITH THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Whenever you and I take a breath, breathe in or breathe out, we are praying with the gift of the Spirit. Unless we are moaning or crying, our breathing utters no words or syllables. Rather it is the barely audible gift of the Spirit built into us at our creation. This Spirit of God has been part of us as community and as individuals in all of time. It is the essence of life.

As Jesus began preparing his followers for his departure, he promised them that the Spirit would continue his presence with them. He makes clear that he must leave in order for the Spirit to be given to his disciples. That Spirit continues Jesus' presence with them. It was not needed while he was physically with them in person. A reading from Acts provides a vivid portrait of the outpouring of the Spirit on Jesus' disciples, indeed, on a large crowd where the diversity of tongues and cultures was seen as a gift. We go on to see the diversity of political views as potentially a gift. We see the diverse pictures of God and our relationship to God as a gift. We begin to see the diversity of our prayer practices as a gift.

We often feel more comfortable with those we view as like us. Like me. Like you and me. Part of our growth in relation to God and each other is our slow coming to know the Christ in each other. Knowing that Christ in each other happens as we realize that others know Christ in us. We move on from this remarkable outpouring of the Spirit gathering and the end of the Great 50 days of Easter with its multiple resurrection visits from Christ into tame everyday life.

The time following Pentecost is called ordinary time. So, on June 6, we step out of Easter's 50 days, the Feast of Weeks in Judaism, and with our Jewish forebears present the fruits of our efforts at the altar in our hearts. What we present may appear minuscule and like a meager offering. But the Spirit breathes on it and makes our first-fruits prayers benefit our

sisters and and brothers. Thus ordinary time extends all the way to Advent on November 27, with a couple of little celebratory breaks: Trinity Sunday, the only Sunday devoted to a doctrine; and All Saints Day on Nov. 1. We throw in some secular occasions, such as Independence Day and Labor Day. And when we put it all together as a first-fruits offering, we look on the whole palette as an extra-ordinary time made extraordinary by ordinary Christ-filled, spirit-guided folks, such as combine in the St. Luke's Community.

A blessed Pentecost to all.

Bruce+