



Pentecost Sunday (B)
May 20, 2018
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato

+Spirit of wisdom and truth, enlighten our minds and hearts. Open us to the knowledge and love of you through Christ Jesus our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Throughout the Easter Season, one of the intercessions in the Prayers of the People prayed for “Dreamers”. We know that that term has come to mean young people who dream of staying in the United States and who long to continue to be productive women and men in society.

In the year 2000, Tom and Kathy Kelly of Greensboro, Georgia, had a dream. “After much research, Tom and Kathy approached the Greensboro Elementary School Principal, Joan Antone, with a plan. The Kelly’s pitched the idea of taking a group of first-graders and providing a long-term education support program throughout the students’ 16 year school career (which included college). The plan would guarantee tuition assistance upon completion of high school. Not surprisingly, Principal Antone jumped at the chance.” (http://www.gbdreamers.org/kellys_article.html)

“The Kelly’s chose to affiliate with the national “I Have a Dream” Foundation... for economically disadvantaged children... and in 2000, the Kelly’s sponsored their own program - The Greensboro Dreamers. It became the first rural “I Have a Dream” program in history.” Tom and Kathy’s goal was “that all of the Dreamers will become productive citizens who feel good about themselves, pursue a wide variety of careers and interests, and become leaders in their community, state and country.” (http://www.gbdreamers.org/kellys_article.html)

After the Ascension of Jesus, perhaps his disciples found themselves in a kind of dream mode, as they anticipated the coming of the promised Spirit. Jesus told them that he had to leave them. He promised that the Spirit would come. The coming of the Spirit of God would be a kind of next step in God’s strategic plan of salvation.

Perhaps, the dreams of the early disciples became reality on this day we call ‘Pentecost’, a day to which we refer as the Birthday of the Church. On this day, fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit descended on a great multitude of people from many parts of the known world. No matter how it happened, lives were forever changed. Those present experienced the power of God’s Spirit that swept through each of them giving them gifts like never before.

The early Church Fathers in the Christian Tradition determined that there are at least seven spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. We recognize them today as the gifts of wisdom, understanding, good counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord, better translated to ‘awe’ of God. These are mentioned in the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 11:1-2.

The early Church Fathers recognized that these attributes and others are characteristic of the reality of the Holy Spirit at work in people’s lives. Sometimes, we can only dream about being wise, understanding, attentive to the voice of God with us, knowledgeable, spiritually enriched and filled with awe at the presence of God.

Today, we might want to be attentive to the Spirit of God and ponder questions which we might ask of ourselves and others:

- Do we truly desire to make wise decisions instead of rash and uninformed ones?
- Do we genuinely long to be more understanding of others and to have others better understand us as well?
- Do we really want a world where right judgment would end lies, bullying, racism and war?

- Do we recognize the need for greater knowledge that would better shape and mold us into a more informed and rational society?
- Do we pray for courage to stand up for what we believe to be true and to live life without fear?
- Do we seek an authentic reverence for God, God's creation and all God's people?
- Do we desire a life filled with wonder and awe of God like a child having an ice cream cone on a hot summer day?

Sometimes, our humanity gets in the way of the life to which we are called by the Spirit of God as baptized Christians. It is through the Sacrament of Baptism that we *are* empowered by the Holy Spirit and given a capacity to love God and all God's people. The Spirit of God enables us to love and to embrace the Spirit's gifts, gifts which can empower us, inspire us and transform us into the Body of Christ.

The Scriptures tells us much about the Spirit of God we celebrate today:

- The Spirit moved over the waters of Creation in Genesis;
- The Spirit enabled the Israelites to endure captivity in Babylon and Egypt;
- The Spirit enabled a humble virgin named Mary to say "yes" to the invitation to bear the Son of God;
- The Spirit filled Jesus with the capacity to fulfill his mission on earth;
- The Spirit enabled those gathered at Pentecost to hear in their own language the Good News of God in Jesus.

God's Spirit is with us every day of our lives. The Spirit enables us to live and breathe. The Spirit enables us to endure those difficult times of our lives, times of sadness and loss, times of heartbreak and pain. The Spirit captures our imaginations and helps us to dream dreams into reality. The Spirit gives us the potential to turn the world upside down, as we become the Spirit of God at work in the world.

The Spirit of God is in us, through us and all around us. When we embrace the Spirit, we receive the grace of God in a special way. We just might become better Christians, better followers of Jesus and better honor the dignity of all people.

Let us open our minds and hearts to the Spirit moving in and through us. Who knows where the Spirit will take us? Who knows if and when our dreams will become reality?

Let us dream big. Let us dream a dream for a world of truth, justice and love, a world where our children and our children's children can and will live in peace. Amen.