

HOMILY
Pentecost Sunday
June 4, 2006

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Davison, Michigan

Perhaps you heard about the man who had been suffering with a headache for several days. Finally he went to see a doctor. However, the office nurse, who looked and acted like a Marine drill sergeant, greeted him gruffly. When he told her about his headache, she barked in a loud stern voice, “Go into that examination room, take off your clothes and put on this hospital gown. The doctor will be there in a few minutes.” The man protested, “But ma’am, I really don’t need to go through all of that. I just have a chronic headache.” To which the nurse answered, “Sir, did you hear what I said? You go into that examination room and put on that hospital gown right now!”

And so the man did. When he got into the room and closed the door, he discovered another man already sitting in there wearing a hospital gown. The man with the headache said to the other guy, “This is ridiculous. I don’t know what in the world I’m doing in here. This is crazy. I just have a headache.” The other man said, “You think you’ve got problems, I just came in here to read the meter.”

Now that nurse had power, didn’t she? Power can be used in at least two ways. It can be unleashed or it can be harnessed. The energy in ten gallons of gasoline, for instance, can be released explosively by dropping a lighted match into a can. Or it can be channeled through the engine of my leased Chevy HHR on a controlled burn and be used to transport me 350 miles. Explosions are spectacular, but controlled burns have lasting effect, staying power.

Today, we witness the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts both ways. At Pentecost, the Spirit exploded on the scene. The Spirit’s presence was like “tongues of fire as well as a noise like a strong driving wind.”

Thousands were affected by one burst of God's power. But the very same spirit worked deep within each one, providing plenty of staying power, transforming them into the living Christ, into temples of God's spirit.

As I see it, the Holy Spirit is graciously and ever at work all over the place. The Spirit is our quiet helper. The Holy Spirit is our unpretentious friend. The Holy Spirit warms us and melts our cold, cold hearts. Perhaps a parable could further explain this thought.

Once upon a time there was a piece of iron, which was very strong and very hard. Many attempts had been made to break it, but all failed.

"I'll master it, " said the Axe, and his blows fell heavily upon the piece of iron. But every blow only made the Axe's edge more blunt, until it finally ceased to strike and gave up in frustration.

"Leave it to me," said the Saw, and it worked back and forth on the iron's surface until its jagged teeth were all worn and broken. Then, in despair, the Saw quit trying and fell to the side.

"Ah," said the Hammer, "I knew you two wouldn't succeed. I'll show you how to do this!" But at the first fierce blow, off flew its head and the piece of iron remained just as before, proud and hard and unchanged.

"Shall I try?" asked the Small Soft Flame. "Forget it," everyone else said. "What can you do? You're too small and you have no strength." But the Small Soft Flame curled around the piece of iron, embraced it and never left it until it melted under its warm irresistible influence.

God's way is not the way of force, but love. God's way is not to break hearts but to melt them. Under the irresistible warmth of God's gracious love, amazing things happen.

Discouraged folks cheer up.

Dishonest folks 'fess up.

Sour folks sweeten up.

Closed folks open up.

Gossipers shut up.

Conflicted folks make up.

Sleeping folks wake up.

Lukewarm folks fire up.

Dry bones shake up.

And pew potatoes stand up.