

The Day of Pentecost

Father David I. Giffen

I speak to you in the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

I don't know how many of you are baseball fans, or perhaps familiar with the franchise which plays out of the city of Pittsburgh – but for more than six decades in the 20th Century, the Pittsburgh Pirates played their home games at a Stadium called Forbes Field. From 1909 to 1971 the beloved home town team played at a Stadium which saw them through two world wars, a great depression, and many other difficult times in their lives.

In this place of solace and on this field of dreams, the people of the city of Pittsburgh found a home, where for 2 or 3 hours, on any given night of the week, the troubles of the world could not penetrate the shelter, which was found at their beloved field.

But like all buildings, Forbes Field came to see its day, and in 1971, the team vacated and the stadium was torn down.

However, at the turn of the century, the city of Pittsburgh formed a new plan for a resurrected Stadium on a new site. The plan was to build a new venue that would recall the great memories of generations past; a new stadium which would be modeled after the great Forbes Field, rebuilding much of the structure almost brick by brick. The design of the ballpark's archways, the lighting, and stadium outlook could not have been more similar – many of the old timer's who grew up at the historic Forbes, could not believe their eyes.

But as one reporter commented soon after the stadium's completion, there was certainly one difference this time 'round. One difference that the fans would likely never see and one difference the players might never even know.

Like at every major Baseball Diamond throughout the Major Leagues, beneath the bleachers and all the vendors' stands is a place that usually goes quite unnoticed: it is the umpire's locker room.

At this new Field in the city of Pittsburgh, at this restored and resurrected Park – there was one major difference to be found. The original Forbes Field had only *one* umpires locker room – while the new field had *two* – Forbes Field had only a men's umpire room, while this new field, saw fit for a women's too.

You see, Major League Baseball doesn't have any women umpires, for no woman has ever umpired a regular season game. But for the designers and architects of this renewed, resurrected and transfigured place – something told them that somewhere down the line; there might just be a need for that new space.

For the Spirit of God calls us into uncharted waters, and places we thought we might never go.

Scripture tells us that on the morning of the Pentecost; the apostles were gathered together, confused and frustrated, trying to decide what it was they were supposed to do next. In a period of less than two months, their leader had broken bread with them, been dragged away before their eyes, and had been beaten within an inch of his life.

Jesus had been crucified upon a cross, had risen from the dead, appeared, preached and proclaimed amongst them again, and had finally ascended into heaven – a busy and confusing couple months, to say the least.

Some of the disciples were certain that it was time to build their public profile, to get out and proclaim the Good News. While others were content to wait – for Jesus had promised that he would return to them again. Some were just so tired, and some were torn from the struggle; many were in need of rest from the turbulence of the ride that they had been on. But what each one of them shared, what they all couldn't help but wonder was, "Where do we go from here?"

In the midst of their unknown future and the letting go of their past came the Spirit that they had been promised, through a baptism like none before. And if they thought it was going to get simpler now, just because God had kept his promise, or easier now, just because Jesus had kept his word, then they had forgotten the character of their Lord and their God. Because this 'spirit' which had come upon them, this 'spirit' which had descended from above, had each of the gathered disciples speaking in new languages, and different tongues.

What languages did they speak and what foreign words did they hear, we might ask? We just don't know for sure. What we do know is this: the gift that they had been given and the languages that they could now share gave all of God's children a renewed and prophetic voice – for the words "Peace be with you," and "The body of Christ" – were translated into every kind of speech.

But this gift that they had been given would not come without effect – for so many had never heard the good news. On this Pentecost

morning, gathered together they realized how much work there was still to do. The spirit had called them one by one, to the furthest corners of the globe; to baptize, to break bread, to care for the poor, and to witness to what they had seen.

No longer would language build up walls, preventing them from spreading the word. It was time to respond and it was time to stand up tall – it was time to go out into the world.

It was time to live out the gospel commands that Jesus had so often spoken. So that in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, the peoples of every language, race and nation, would know that they were God's children too.

So without their messiah before them, they were led out into the world, 'spirit filled' and renewed.

Today, we, at the Church of the Transfiguration, begin the celebration of our 90th year. A ninety year history that has seen this place continually transform and transfigure in many new and different ways.

Over the last year together, you and I have seen many changes, and we have seen beginnings sprout anew. We have given thanks for the ministry which has been offered here throughout our past, and have asked God to lead us to the places where He plans for us to go.

We have stood firmly at the crossroads of the morning of the Pentecost, both literally and figuratively speaking. We have said goodbye to the way things have been, while we have eagerly

awaited what God has in store for us next. We have walked forward in the knowledge that our story *will* continue, while we welcome those who will help us to write the next chapter of our book.

Yet in the midst of the unknown of our future and the letting go of our past has come a Spirit of God's promise, through a baptism like none before – for our ministry together has not stagnated or halted – in fact it has been born again anew.

We have been blessed by the ministry of children among us, who have come to teach us 'The Lord's Prayer.' We have 'Cooked up Community' on Tuesday nights – receiving food for both body and soul. We have carolled in the community proclaiming the story of the new born King. We have given praises to our God as the choir leads us to joyfully sing. We have been stewards of our property as God's glory is seen in our midst – we have embraced the Spirit that has descended upon us – we have given thanks for being so abundantly blessed.

When the apostles sat huddled together on that Pentecost morning, waiting for their future to happen *to them*, they did not know what would transpire next. But in that Pentecost moment, as the Holy Spirit descended upon them, they were reminded of who they had been. That through Christ, and in Christ, and with Christ their Lord, they were still who God had called them to be – that living in the Spirit, and united to one another, they could not help but continue Christ's ministry.

You and I *are not* a people who will wait for the future to happen to us on another day. We are a people who walk 'spirit filled' into our future, transforming lives along the way.

The past *is* behind us, and the future *is* ahead – but the Spirit of God is upon us **now** and is calling us to do *great things*. To baptize, to break bread, to care for the poor, and to witness to what we have seen – to continually become that chosen creation, who God has made us, and calls us to be.

A number of years ago, I was privileged to hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu give a Homily in which he urged the congregation, to “Become who you are!”

On this Pentecost Sunday, as we go out into the world, I say to you: remember who we have been, be excited about who we are becoming, and in this moment, in the presence one another and filled with the Spirit of God, my brothers and sisters, I challenge you, don’t wait – let us become **who we are!**”

Thanks be to God.