

Pentecost + May 20, 2018

God connects to Christ and the church by giving us a bath. I am so glad we have a vessel large enough for a bath. Carson, Eugene, Matthew: you are in for quite a bath today. And more! Beyond the bath, God touches us through the laying on of hands and anointing with the oil of chrism. In these gestures, we pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us and at the anointing we say: “[Eugene, Matthew, Carson], child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ forever.”

Recently, I heard the true story about the baptism of a two -year old child. When the Pastor spoke these words: “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ forever,” the child unexpectedly replied: “**Uh-oh!**”

I cannot image a more appropriate response. God is claiming not just a part of us but *every* aspect of our lives. To bear the Spirit’s seal and to be filled with the Spirit is no small thing. While the Spirit is often gentle and unassuming, sometimes the Spirit creates quite a ruckus, like that Pentecost day long ago. With the rush of a mighty wind and tongues of fire, a new movement is launched in the world where the good news is spoken in every tongue and heard in every language.

Like fire, the Spirit cajoles, disrupts, surprises, and shakes things up!

Today, nine of our young sisters and brothers will be publicly renewing their baptismal vows. Their confirmation project was to choose a famous saint, someone whose life was a great example of living the way of Jesus. I was blown away by their choices and their testimonies last Wednesday night. They chose people who changed the church and changed the world. A bunch of rabble rousers: martyrs like Lucy, Agnes, Lawrence, Oscar Romero and Macmillan Kolbe, whose passion for service and seeking justice cost them their lives. Martin Luther, Ambrose of Milan, and St. Patrick, whose passion for the good news of God’s love renewed and changed the church, and even a country! And Sojourner Truth, whose chosen name says it all, spoke truth to power against slavery and for the rights of women. These choices say something about our sisters and brothers affirming their baptism today and what they hold to be true and holy.

I’m curious to know how our confirmation students will change the church and the world. I’m curious how Eugene, Carson and Matthew will do the same. And isn’t that the point, in so many ways?

When we are anointed at baptism, God sets us apart to serve all, to seek justice and peace, to tell the good news, to share our gifts with church and neighbor and there’s no telling where the Spirit will take us!

Being a member of Christ’s body and following Jesus is fueled by an energy that comes from God alone. The Spirit that hovered over creation, called and anointed prophets and priests, fell upon Jesus at his baptism, and change the world forever at Pentecost is poured out on us. Imagine that! The life-changing, life-giving, justice making, healing, disruptive and mission making Holy Spirit is active in our church and in our lives. What an incredible power we have at our disposal. Let’s use it well! Amen.