

Fr. Morelock
Pentecost C
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Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition are three phrases, three values that we have placed on our new church sign outside. We have service times, our web address, office hours, even the word Anglican in big bold letters in the middle so that passersby don't get confused as to who we are.

But the phrase, Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, and Holy Tradition, might be the most important thing on that sign, because those values are our foundation here at Holy Comforter.

Holy Scripture because it is God-breathed; it contains all things necessary to know our God and what he stands for and what he has done for us. It encapsulates everything we need to know about who God intends for us to be as his church.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” These words sum up the giving of the Law in Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, and they are reiterated by Christ himself in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

We have so many other passages that tell us who our God is and our relationship to him:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

“One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.”

“Go, and sin no more.”

“Abide in me.”

“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

“Go and make disciples in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit,” are Jesus’ final words to his disciples before ascending into heaven, saying I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.”

And,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

We are a Bible Church at Holy Comforter. Our whole Eucharistic liturgy is essentially all bible verses. It’s who we are.

Holy Tradition is also on our sign. We hold our bible up to the world saying mark these words and come to know our God who is Love. But we don’t do that alone. We are in the Apostolic Tradition. And those millions of saints and sinners going back two millennia stand behind us bearing witness to the tradition we have received.

Apostles, bishops, priests, deacons, martyrs, holy men and women, angels, archangels, confessors, patriarchs, little children and the elderly have all born witness, have all testified to the truth and passed it on to us. Every single day since Jesus Christ walked this earth his followers have born witness to what has been passed to them from God himself, and we are in that tradition, and we honor that tradition;

we uphold it and don't alter it so that the world finds us more palatable, more in line with their values.

And like Holy Scripture this Apostolic Tradition tells us about who we are and who God is. He is faithful to his people; he keeps his promises.

And Jesus promised us saying he will not leave us comfortless; in fact he will send us a Comforter, and Advocate, a Helper, who will lead us into all truth. He makes good on his promise to be with us even to the end of the age by planting himself in our hearts through the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition are values that we hold dear. We will never part with them. But we could never have either without the Holy Spirit.

When the day of Pentecost had come, 50 days after the Lord's resurrection, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Tongues of fire rested on each of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit lead them.

Notice how in the Old Testament when the Lord descended on mount Sinai, the whole mountain was covered in flame and smoke, but as the Lord left the fire left. Here at Pentecost the fire rests on each disciple's head, and there God remained.

The time had come for the Church to continue the ministry established by Jesus when he said the Kingdom of Heaven had come

near. This was the kingdom gathered in the upper room, and this kingdom was about to get a major upgrade.

Saint John Chrysostom in the fifth century once preached on the feast of Pentecost saying “Do you see the type? What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest and the fruits to be gathered. Look at the reality now, how the time has come to ply the sickle of the Word. The Spirit, keen-edged, came down in place of the sickle. For hear the words of Christ, “Lift up your eyes and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.” And again, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” He himself, taking our nature as the first fruits, lifted it up high and he was himself the first to ply the sickle. For this reason he calls the Word also the Seed.”

What Chrysostom is saying is that what Jesus started through his incarnation, death, resurrection, and finally his ascension, the Church would continue this ministry, growing God’s kingdom, ever expanding the knowledge of the love of God for his creation manifested in the life of Jesus. The Church would now continue this ministry, but not alone.

Brothers and sisters, we can’t do anything alone. We must have God with us, because growing the kingdom, growing in our knowledge of God, can only be accomplished by God himself.

So the Holy Spirit did not just come in contact with the disciples on this occasion, but it rested on them, it remained on them, within them and the Holy Spirit remains in each of us who have received baptism, and he leads us into truth. He gives his Church wisdom to interpret scripture. He gives us fortitude and perseverance so that we can stand up to our own sins and the rest of the world that just doesn’t understand why the Christians won’t fall in line.

We could not be the Church without the Holy Spirit infusing us. Without the Holy Spirit, our Bible loses all weight and power. Without the Holy Spirit, our Apostolic Tradition loses all authority.

Without the Holy Spirit, the whole brutal death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is all for nothing, the life of an innocent man wasted, because then we are left comfortless. We are sheep whose shepherd has abandoned us to the wolves.

But that is not the case. Our God is faithful. He keeps his promises. And when he tells us he loves us he means it. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, or where you come from.

The Holy Spirit gives speech to the disciples in every language, showing us that God is for all of us. God has come for every person you come across. We Anglicans commonly refer to ourselves as catholic (which comes from the Greek phrase kata holos, which means universal, because the Holy Spirit who leads us is all encompassing.

And we may have to leave it there, or else this sermon could take hours. The Holy Spirit, the part of the Holy Trinity that is talked about least, is so vital to every aspect of our Christian journey, every Sunday could be Pentecost and we still wouldn't have enough time to appreciate everything he does for us.

Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition. But the greatest of these, without doubt, is the Holy Spirit. Happy Pentecost. Amen.