

An Out-of-Faith Experience

Intro. One day when I was at college in Ohio, the tornado warning siren went off. I went outside hoping to see it. My Midwestern schoolmates thought I was nuts. I didn't understand tornadoes weren't like hurricanes: there is little or no warning. We have recently seen pictures of the devastating results of tornadoes. Their powerful winds swept homes and businesses away. Too much of the wrong kind of power. The reading from the Acts of the Apostles describes something more friendly, but still powerful that kind of "blew" the disciples out of the house and into the street.

I. People in the Middle East are used to the powerful windstorms that whip across the desert driving sand into everything. The sound often precedes the arrival of the wind. Anyone who has

been there knows how dangerous they can be. The only response is hunker down and wait for it to end. Pentecost was something different. Not quite like the sounds of the Santa Ana winds of California, or the Chinook wind of the Dakotas. In fact it wasn't a wind at all. It was a "**noise** *like* a strong, driving wind. The sound didn't cause fear in the already anxious disciples. Apparently not even the "tongues as of fire" hovering over them panicked them. This noise must have brought an incredible feeling of peace and calmness which allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to *fill* each one present. Then the power was unleashed to the people who heard them speaking of the "mighty acts of God" in their own language. No one needed a translator. The Spirit of God gave the disciples the words and gave the people in the street the ears to hear.

Four years in Ohio and I never got to see a tornado. Whatever it was that happened on Pentecost it changed the disciples and the world. Their experience of the power of the Holy Spirit “lit” them up, gave them incredible energy and blew away their fear.

Concl. What are *our* similar experiences? What has “lit” us up? Love can do that. Excitement before a game, dance or music recital can do it. Seeing a long work project completed can do it. The recent end of the school year has students *and* teachers rushing out of the buildings as if propelled by a tornado. What *religious* experiences have done that? Some of the prime moments for Catholic Christians are Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination – sacramental moments when we might have strongly felt the presence of God. Maybe a

retreat or even a moment of prayer. Whatever the experience is, as disciples we need to “plug in” to these moments as *our* power sources, as regularly as we plug in our smart devices to recharge *them*. Think of the commercial where people use their phones to charge up others’ phones. The Holy Spirit supplies the power. Worship and Communion provide the connection. We go out to charge up others. **Pentecost was not a one-time thing. It is on-going.**

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