

We are all in need of the Holy Spirit. Every one of us.

Today is Pentecost and it's the day we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles while they were gathered in Jerusalem. Leading up to this event, the Apostles were afraid and fearful for their lives. They were still dealing with the loss of their friend and teacher, Jesus. They didn't know what was to happen to them.

The Holy Spirit enabled the Apostles to face, with acceptance, the fear and rejection they had felt after the crucifixion of Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit that empowered them fulfill their mission of spreading the word of God and the teachings of Jesus.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles the description of the Holy Spirit is very dramatic. It describes violent rushing wind, noise that fill, the entire house and tongues of fire resting on the heads of each of the Apostles.

In my experience, the presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life isn't always so theatrical. Many times the Holy Spirit comes to us in unexpected ways. It is usually much more subtle. Instead of tongues of flames resting on our heads, on the surface it can be a simple glow from a candle flame, but no less powerful.

The Holy Spirit in our lives can help us to move beyond ourselves, to think of others, to be more empathetic and live as Jesus has thought us. The Holy Spirit can come to us in many shapes and forms. It's there every Friday night when we feed the hungry and homeless at the Friday Night Supper Program. It's there in the small and big events in our lives. And it's present here tonight. We just need to be prepared to recognize it and receive it.

The gospel readings show us that the Holy Spirit is open to all who wish to receive it.

As a life-long Catholic, my introduction to the idea of the Holy Spirit was through the sacraments. But over time, I learned that the Holy Spirit is not limited to just the sacraments.

The nuns at Mary Queen of Heaven parochial School in Brooklyn NY also taught me that once I receive the Holy Spirit it would stay within me and guide me always. The nuns were right about that.

I believe that the Holy Spirit was guiding me in May 1992 when I attending a Dignity Boston service for the first time. I saw a community of LGBTQI Catholics who were taking charge of their Church experience. They were not looking for guidance from the Church hierarchy. The Holy Spirit was their guide. They used inclusive language. An equal number of women and men were on the alter. And most importantly the liturgy was infused with the theology of our lived experiences as LGBTQI people.

Over time I became aware that my spirituality was growing and changing. Being part of Dignity Boston enabled me to see my relationship with God in a whole new way. I connected my spirituality with my sexuality and only saw it as good, and that it was my gift from God. The Holy Spirit was moving within me.

In the readings today, we learn that once they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were able to communicate and be understood by people from different nations. Their lives changed and they moved forward with purpose. For me as a gay man, and for all LGBTQI Catholics, Dignity Boston has given me a new language. It gives us a new way to think and speak about being queer and being Catholic.

We all need the Holy Spirit in our lives to deal with the challenges we face on a daily basis and to strive to live more like Jesus. Let the Holy Spirit guide our daily lives and let us be aware of the subtle ways it moves within us.

As a child at Mary Queen of Heaven school I thought that the Holy Spirit was a reward for being a good Catholic boy. I would receive it after communion or going to confession and I could bank it away for some future purpose. Today, the Holy Spirit means something different. The Holy Spirit is a helper, that guides me in how to live my life in the light of God's words.

Let us each find our own Holy Spirit and become aware of the many ways the Holy Spirit impacts our daily lives.