

Feast of Pentecost 2026

A Sermon Preached by Fr Ian M Delinger

on May 24, 2026

Acts 2:1-21 / Psalm 104:25-35, 37 / 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 / John 20:19-23

*Come, Holy Spirit, for moved by You
the prophets wrote and spoke:
unlock the truth, Yourself the key;
in my words, unseal the sacred book.*

*inside each of us
there awaits
a wonder
full
spirit of freedom*

*she waits
to dance
in the rooms
of our heart
that are closed
dark and cluttered*

*she waits
to dance
in the spaces
where negative feelings
have built barricades
and stock-piled weapons*

*she waits
to dance
in the corners*

*where we still
do not believe
in our goodness*

*inside each of us
there awaits
a wonder
full
spirit of freedom*

*she will lift light feet
and make glad songs
within us
on the day
we open the door of ego
and let enemies
stomp out*

This poem entitled “*inside each of us*” by Joyce Rupp is a spiritual gift to us. First, let me explain an interesting form in the poem. Rupp writes of *A wonder “full” Spirit of Freedom* twice in the poem. The way it is set out is “a wonder” is on one line; “full” is on the next line; “spirit of freedom” is on a third line. I think we’re supposed to understand this Spirit of Freedom as both a wonder and full. And since the word “wonderful” is a contraction of the two words, the way Rupp lays it out takes us back to the original meaning of “full of, having, characterized by” – in this case – wonder! “Wonder” is something that is a “strange or marvelous thing, unheard of or supernatural event; object of astonishment”. So, the Wonder Full Spirit of Freedom is a Spirit that is *a marvelous thing, and supernatural, that is full of astonishment*.

The scriptures jump around a bit as we hear it today: from Day of Pentecost when the Disciples received the Spirit, with a flashback to Joel in the OT prophesying the coming of the Spirit, to Jesus on the Day of Resurrection breathing the Spirit

into them. It's all out of chronological order, but it's all pointing to the same moment – the moment that *a marvelous thing, and supernatural that is full of astonishment* was bestowed upon the Disciples. And it wasn't just bestowed: Jesus:

breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

And on the Day of Pentecost:

A rush of a violent wind ... filled the entire house.

This is reminiscent of Creation when:

a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.

This is not a small thing; this is not even a big thing. This is a monumental and divine activity! It was so monumental that Peter quotes the prophecy of Joel from almost a millennium earlier that illustrates the monumental and divine activity:

prophetic sons & daughters, beatific visions, divine dreams, heavenly portents and earthly signs, with blood, fire, and smoky mist, a darkened sun and a blood moon.

And everyone will be included: even the slaves, both men and women. All this will come when YHWH will pour out the Spirit – the *marvelous thing, supernatural, that is full of astonishment ... before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day*. It really does hold up against The Incarnation and The Resurrection as something to celebrate and something to spend considerable time asking, "*What does this mean for me?*"

So, the Holy Spirit came thusly:

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

We have long retained the Fire symbolism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is within you; the Spirit is around you; the Spirit is present when you come here on Sunday morning for worship. And every one of us experiences Sunday morning differently, we receive the Spirit differently. So, I want you to think about how the Spirit gets breathed into you on Sunday morning, and I want you to take that Tongue of Fire that rests upon you, and I want you to speak your language of that *marvelous thing, supernatural, that is full of astonishment* that you experience.

In your bulletin, you may have already seen the red and yellow flames. They are actually sticky notes. On those sticky notes, I want you to write down your responses and reactions to:

- *How is the Spirit breathed into you in Sunday worship?*
- *How do you experience the wonder “full” Spirit of Freedom in Sunday worship?*
- *How do you feel Christ’s peace or forgiveness with you in Sunday worship?*

Or anything that’s in the gist of: *What’s your favorite bit of Sunday morning – what brings you here on Sunday morning?* The questions are underneath the flames. Each bulletin has 2 Red and 2 Yellow flames. If you need more flames, you can ask the Ushers. I’ll give you about 4min now, and then if you have an epiphany during the rest of the service, you can scribble it down.

<4min>

<REVEAL CAKE>

When you come up for Communion, bring your filled-out flames with you and stick them onto the birthday cake like candles. If you don't finish by the time you come up for Communion, or you think of something during the week, or you are watching online, you have time. I'm going to leave this cake here, and you can add flames throughout the week *and* next Sunday. It will be up during the services on Trinity Sunday next week.

After everyone has had a chance to share their experience of the Spirit in Sunday worship, I will collate them and share that with you through The Saturday Email. We will discover the many ways through which we experience that *marvelous thing, supernatural, that is full of astonishment* called the *wonder full Spirit of Freedom*.

Today we are reminded by the story of Pentecost and by Jesus that we have been given a *wonder full Spirit ... a Spirit of Freedom*, writes Joyce Rupp. That Spirit of Freedom is the energy for our life in Christ. Through the Spirit of Freedom, we are given gifts with which to give the Good News of Jesus Christ back to the world. Your Gifts of the Spirit are your authentic voice, your unique place in Creation, your special freckle on the Body of Christ. And both *individually* and *together*, we can accomplish some amazing things, like we heard Peter citing Joel.

On your flames, you wrote down your *experience of receiving* the Holy Spirit. Now you must find your authentic voice, your Gifts of the Spirit that can be used to "*go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*" Last week I preached about Discipleship, about it being our turn to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God. In contemporary Discipleship circles, a Spiritual Gifts Inventory is a way to discover how individuals and congregations can best serve their community or one another. Each of you has Gifts of the Spirit that are nurtured by you being here today. But as the community of the St Stephen's Family, we also have gifts. A prime example of a Gift that we have as St Stephen's is previously unused property. We are able to use that gift so that CAPSLO can serve the unhoused in the downtown area, and Grandmother's House can serve the preschoolers of SLO.

Every Sunday, every time we worship, every time the Spirit is breathed into us afresh, we are called to reflect and act on the questions:

“How will I respond to the Wonder Full Spirit?”

“How will we respond to the Wonder Full Spirit?”

Notice the massive shift in the mood of the Disciples. Our Gospel reading is set on the Day of Resurrection, and

the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews.

They were afraid! They were afraid of the Jews! And Jesus says, “Peace” and breathed the Spirit into them. And then in Acts, they are fully confident, speaking in many languages, and proclaiming the Coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day in front of *Jews* from every nation under heaven! What a turnaround! All because of the Wonder Full Spirit Jesus breathed into them, and then again received at the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit gives you the confidence to proclaim the Coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day with your authentic voice, with your unique Gifts of the Spirit.

When we read or hear scripture, we are often inspired by it. But we also often forget that we are in these stories. These aren’t history lessons. These are *living* lessons, with the Spirit breathed into them, as well as into us. You are Peter, you are one of the 11, you are one who is amazed yet perplexed, you are one who prophesies or dreams dreams, one with wisdom or knowledge or faith or healing, one who shouts “*Jesus is Lord!*” because you have the Holy Spirit. *You* are in these stories because God has poured out the Spirit upon *all* flesh.

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*she will lift light feet
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on the day*

*[you] open the door of ego
and let enemies
stomp out*

The Wonder Full Spirit of Freedom is a Spirit that is a marvelous thing and supernatural that is full of astonishment. Don't let it wait to dance ... open the door of ego and let her make glad songs within you! Let that Wonder Full Spirit within you dance now!