

When the disciples were instructed to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit to arrive, they did not know for how *long* they'd have to wait, for *what* what exactly they were waiting for, or even for how they would *know* that the wait was actually over. Like most things related to God, it all seemed a bit of a mystery once again.

What they *did* know is that Jesus had left them and they were once again feeling the unease of being abandoned. But, they were also told that they would be given courage to testify to the resurrection, even without the main evidence of the resurrected Jesus no longer present. That is what Jesus told them would happen. And this is exactly what happened.

Just like the Holy Spirit came upon the waters over creation, or upon David, or upon Mary in Nazareth, or upon Zechariah in the temple, or upon Jesus in the Jordan River to send him to the wilderness, so the Holy Spirit came upon them in Jerusalem. For every one of these situations the Spirit is the igniter of something brand new. The

Spirit creates something that previously could not have been imagined before.

In this case, what was unimagined is that their fear would be turned into a courage, and their dispersion and isolation would be turned into an ability to connect and gather with other people who were different from themselves. They were brought together with people whose language they could not speak. People from different regions, dialects, and cultures were gathered into one. This was something new. The Spirit became a unifier of people, not a divider.

Perhaps that is one of the hallmarks of the Spirit: to bring people together that you previously thought would be unheard of. I think the church, broadly speaking, is like that. In the church people of different backgrounds, cultures, ages, and socio-economic status are gathered together. People you never thought would be together. Just as the Father and the Son are one, woven together by the Spirit, so we have been brought into one body with other people. It's a remarkable thing. And according to the creeds it is one of the acts of the Spirit.

The last paragraph of the creed is all about the Spirit, and it identifies all the things the Spirit is responsible for: holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. That's a lot of stuff. But in all that activity it is about life; and it is about being gathered together.

Philip asks Jesus to see the Father. "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?" Jesus responds that he is one with the Father. *If you see me, you see the Father. If you hear me, you hear the Father.*

As the Father and the Son are unified by the Spirit, so we too are brought into that unity in an indissoluble and eternal bond. This is where you belong: in Jesus. This is where your home is: in Jesus. This is where you find your comfort and your peace: in Jesus. Living from that position is a place of security and consolidation. Far from being abandoned or being filled with fear, living from this knowledge is a place of comfort. That's why I come to church: to be reminded of this great and mighty act of the Spirit that I so easily forget and cannot manufacture on my own.

The greatest act of the Spirit is that you and I are gathered together with others on this journey; that we are not alone; that we are forgiven; and that we are reminded of the thing that is most unimaginable of all: the resurrection to new life.

May the Holy Spirit that came upon us in our baptism through water; and was invoked on us with the laying on of hands at our confirmation continue this good work of gathering us together, of igniting us with courage, and of reminding us where we belong, to our lives end. Because God knows, that is what we need.



Church of St. John the Evangelist
36 Henderson Street, Elora, ON, N0B 1S0
519-846-5911