

Pentecost
St. Paul's/Resurrección, Mount Vernon, WA

June 8, 2025
Rev. Paul Moore

The Spirit of God

I have been ordained a very long time. In fact, I was ordained four times in my life. I was ordained to the family of God on Good Friday, April 11, 1968 by the rite of Holy Baptism. I was ordained to the laity of the Episcopal Church by confirmation and the laying on of Episcopal hands on in the Spring of 1985 at the Church of Our Savior, Dallas, TX. I was ordained to the Holy Order of Deacons in the Episcopal Church on May 19, 1990 in the Catedral del Señor, Quito, Ecuador, 35 years, 1 month and 13 days ago. I was ordained to the Holy Order of Priests in the same Cathedral on November 16, 1991, 33 years, 7 months and 16 days ago. I have been a cleric in the Church of God longer than I haven't.

The ordination I remember most clearly was the last one, to the priesthood. When the bishop laid his hands on my head, and other clergy laid their hands on me, I felt like fire fell from heaven, the fire of the Holy Spirit. I knew that when I stood up, I would never be the same. I have never lost that feeling, and it has convinced me of something. The Holy Spirit is always present in the Church, whether we know it or not—and that has made all the difference.

I don't stop being a cleric today. But I do stop doing some things. This is my last Sunday to serve as your priest. It is a charge I took up on January 14th, 2019. Now it is time to pass the leadership of this congregation back to your Vestry and the Diocese. To say I do so with mixed feelings is understated. It's more like driving up Highway 20, up and up past Rock, Diablo and Ross Lakes, past the point where they stop plowing in the winter, up among the soaring titans of the North Cascades, and getting to that place where you swing through a narrow pass and the road begins to descend into another kind of climate, landscape and orientation. Today we are at the pass.

Jesus and the disciples were at a kind of Washington Pass in today's Gospel lesson. He, too, is leaving, and the disciples are feeling overwhelmed and not just a bit lost. "What do you mean you are leaving?" "What do you mean we can't go where you are going?" "If you go, this whole endeavor is going to just fall apart." Jesus spends 4 chapters in the Gospel of John calming their nerves, orienting them to the new kind of life that awaits. Central to his message is this: The Spirit will be with them to lead them. The Spirit will remind them of all Jesus has been teaching them. The Spirit will continue to lead them into all truth. By the Spirit, they will continue to do what Jesus has been doing. And then, "Peace I give you, my own peace I leave you. Do not be afraid." Do not be afraid.

Be at peace. Reach deep, get in touch with the Spirit, follow the Spirit's lead, and all shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

Does it work? Yes, it works. Look at the first lesson for today and you see. On that first Pentecost, that we celebrate today, the Spirit descends. Timid disciples become bold apostles. They pick up the charge Jesus gave them and begin to forge a movement that has reached every corner of the earth. The Christian movement has become one great channel in a huge river of God's truth, beauty and goodness, that has flowed since eternity and will not cease until all is resolved. It is valid, it is strong and it is sufficient, because it is Spirit-driven, and we are part of that flow.

It is enormously presumptuous of me to say, but this day our two congregations are not unlike the disciples. Many of us (me included) are feeling overwhelmed and not a little lost. You may wonder how you will ever move forward. I give you Jesus' words. The Spirit is already here and is already at work. Open your hearts to the peace Jesus gives, not like the world would give. Do not be afraid. I give you the testimony of the book of Acts as proof. Timid disciples can become bold apostles. Great works can be done in the power of the Spirit.

I also give you your own stories. Who was it who first called Episcopalians together in this town to form St. Paul's back in 1891? It was the Spirit—otherwise it would have shriveled on the vine. It almost has several times, but the congregation has always regained her feet again. Was that not the Spirit? My time with you is one chapter in the story of St. Paul's and the Spirit. The last six and a half years are testimony to the power of the Spirit to help the Church regain her feet.

Who was it that drove the Rev. Josefina Beecher to begin working with farm workers, an effort that eventually birthed Resurrección? Was it not the Spirit? Otherwise, it would never have been born. Surely, the congregation has seen difficult times, but something always brought it back to its feet. Was it not the Spirit? My time with you is one chapter in the story of Resurrección and the Spirit. The last six and a half years with you are testimony to the Spirit's power to return you raise you up.

I have every confidence—not in that you have everything in order; you're still trying to figure out what order might even look like—but in the Spirit among you and between you. Listen to the Spirit, follow her direction, trust her in one another and in the guidance you get from the Diocese. And know that you know that you know this: It is not the Diocese that will carry you forward, or whoever fills this pulpit and stands behind this Altar. It has always been and will always be the Spirit.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. The Spirit walks with you, and that is enough.