



“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” Acts 1:8

Dear Friends,

On May 20th we will be celebrating the Day of Pentecost. So, it seems good to discuss what the work of the spirit can mean for us personally, and for our community of faith.

Martin Luther in his “Small Catechism” speaking about the work of the Holy Spirit puts it this way:

“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ’s everlasting life. This is most certainly true.”

How does that apply in our everyday lives and in our community of faith? Let me share with you my personal faith story. When I was in high school, faithful to the religious tradition I was raised in, I was attracted to a charismatic after school prayer group which had about 40 students. While you may be thinking that I was drawn by “awesome George Lucas” effects of the Holy Spirit that might be part of such a prayer group, you would be wrong. When they spoke about knowing Jesus as their Lord and Savior in a personal intimate way, I was hooked. It eventually led me to confess Christ as my savior at an altar rail of a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in 1971.

In 1978, as a counselor for the “I found it Evangelistic Campaign”, one of my calls was to an elderly man who had been involved in his Baptist church all his life.

He wanted me to visit him and when I came he made a profession of faith of Christ he felt led to do. How did that happen for someone so involved in his church? Did I do that? Or was it the work of the Holy Spirit? Like one television network likes to say, “You decide”. In 1985 a huge renewal conference of the new Presbyterian Church USA took place in Dallas, Texas. Famous preachers were there, but outside of their standard message, the conference fell flat. Then a professor from Princeton Theological Seminary, who was a “stand-in” for the better-known president of the seminary who couldn’t make it, gave a message on the Holy Spirit (I was warned that this speaker would not be inspiring). His message turned out to be the most powerful of the Conference. The title? The Holy Spirit: Power for Proclamation (of Christ). So, was that the professor’s own knowledge or the work of the Holy Spirit? Again; You decide.

A number of years ago a member (of one my former congregations) was involved in a spiritual retreat weekend from a group that used our church building. Later she recounted how a man who was a faithful member of his Missouri Synod Lutheran Church announced in a meeting on that retreat weekend that he wanted to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord. He had a solid background. Surely it was the powerful and foundational work of the Holy Spirit that led him to that point.



Pastor John Van Haneghan

We should never be afraid to ask God for the “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit in our lives or in our church. For if we understand the primary work of the Spirit it is in effectively communicating the good news of the gospel to others and growing in the faith in our relationship to God under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Pr. John Van Haneghan

