

Pentecost/Baptism Sunday 2023
May 28, 2023

Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Mark 1:9-11

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him. ¹¹ And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Please pray with me:

God be in our heads and in our understanding. God be in our eyes and in our looking. God be in our mouths and in our speaking. God be in our hearts and in our thinking.

Today I want to share a few words with our baptismal candidates before they are baptized in hopes that all of us can consider the meaning of baptism and the importance of this public act in our lives.

To Cathi, Michael, Emily, and Julian – your baptism is cause for great joy!

I can still remember my baptism more than forty years ago and I pray that your baptism will be something you remember all the days of your life. Your baptism today is an opportunity for all of us to pause and reflect on this powerful symbol of discipleship and rebirth.

Just so you know, no one expects you to have this all figured out. There isn't anyone at FCCO that has all the answers. What we do have each other and the shared desire to follow Jesus. Baptism is one step on a life-long journey of loving others the way Jesus taught us to love. Your baptism is a powerful reminder of who you are, why you are, and who is with you.

We baptize by immersion because that is how John baptized Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, the Bible says that the spirit of God descended like a dove and a voice from heaven said, "This is my child, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Today we affirm that you are a beloved child of God. No matter what, don't forget this. This is who you are.

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his ministry. Your baptism marks the beginning of your ministry as one who strives to follow Jesus. This means that by virtue of your baptism you are a minister of the gospel. You have a why, a purpose. It doesn't matter if you are a student, a doctor, a plumber, or an artist – whatever you do for a living – wherever you go – you have a

holy calling. You are called to work for justice, show compassion, build people up and treat each person you meet as a person of worth. You have an important role in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. No act of love is ever wasted. There is more than enough love to share.

Your baptism is also a reminder that you are not alone in this work. You are part of the body of Christ, the church. Together, we continue what Jesus began. Each Sunday, as we gather around the table, we remember this. The table is a symbol of our unity. Everyone is at a different place on the journey, yet each Sunday we gather at the table as one; to remember Jesus and how he taught us to live, and to find strength and nourishment for whatever lies ahead.

It is no coincidence that your baptism is on Pentecost Sunday. Today is the day we celebrate God breathing life and passion into the disciples. God took the Spirit that guided Jesus and poured it out on the church in spectacular fashion. If you read the story in the second chapter of Acts you see Jesus' disciples are filled with the strength and courage to take the good news of God's love to the ends of the earth. The story says the wind blew and the Holy Spirit came down like fire. People wondered what got into the disciples!

My hope and prayer are that people will wonder what has gotten into you. It would be great if people started to wonder what has gotten into all those people at FCCO! Because when the Spirit blows among us, and we work together, amazing things happen. The hungry are fed. The lost are found. The homeless are housed. The outcasts are welcomed. The broken are healed. Wars end. Peace prevails. This mighty spirit connects us and empowers us to be God's healing love where there is brokenness.

The Apostle Paul says that God's spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. It also produces; passion, courage, gratitude, and generosity.

I wish I could say it was easy. It's not. Like all of us you will be tempted at one point in your life or another, to forget who you are and why you are. You will experience difficult things that make you question all of this. You will be overwhelmed by the evil and the brokenness of the world. Your message of love will be met with hostility and rejection. If, and when, any of this happens to you; remember your baptism. Remember who you are, why you are, and who is with you. This is the path to true greatness.

It is an honor and a privilege to share this path with you.