

A Pentecost meditation

I do crossword and Sudoku puzzles almost every day. It's a hedge against my mind wearing out before my body. My family history suggests that I should be concerned about this. Actually, since I am a theologian I ought to be working on another puzzle: Pentecost. Pentecost and the Holy Spirit have always mystified me. In this I am solidly Lutheran – though Luther, I think, did get something fundamentally correct about the vocation of the Spirit:

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 through the Gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth.

(From the explanation to the third article of the creed in Luther's *Small Catechism*)

So far, so good. But not far enough. We Lutherans are so Christocentric – so focused on the second article of the creed – that we haven't fully worked through either our doctrine or our practice with respect to the Holy Spirit. We need help. We need to learn from other tributaries of the Christian river, tributaries where the sisters and brothers are far less reticent about, embarrassed by, or resistant to the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives than we tend to be.

Pentecost is the portal to the remainder of the church year. The preceding seasons pay more attention to faith than to life. The last segment, the long period after Pentecost and before Advent, places more emphasis on living than on believing, on Christianity as a way of life rather than a body of beliefs. In truth, what today we call Christianity the earliest community called the Way.

Let's use this time to puzzle through the Way of the Spirit, the Way of love, the Way of discipleship – not just thinking about the puzzle, but working it. It's risky business: our lives could get out of hand – our hands, that is.

Let us pray:

God our creator, the resurrection of your Son offers life to all the peoples of earth. By your Holy Spirit, kindle in us the fire of your love, empowering our lives for service and our tongues for praise, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Collect for Pentecost, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 36)