

**Dear Fr Alex,**

Congratulations on the 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of your ordination for service in our Diocese!

*All the Doggett Center Community*

## **PENTECOST SUNDAY**

Today is Pentecost Sunday. As you know, Pentecost is sometimes called the birthday of the Church.

Why is that? What happened at Pentecost anyway?

The event of Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church. Out of that event local, individual churches began to be formed. After Pentecost the small group of disciples that we find huddled together in one place at the beginning of the narrative go out as apostles to establish churches throughout the region which in turn sent missionaries to other regions until Christianity spread throughout the known world.

Obviously Pentecost was an exciting experience for those who were there to be a part of it. What happened at Pentecost was unique. As far as we know, nothing like what is described here has ever occurred since then. It was a one-time deal.

However the event itself points to some lessons for us and our time. We may see as we look at the meaning of Pentecost that although it was a unique event, the work of God through the Holy Spirit that the event points to is a work that was going on before Pentecost and that has continued ever since. Pentecost points to God's desire to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to all persons. The word Pentecost is the Greek term for the Jewish festival of Weeks, so named because it fell on the fiftieth day after the ceremony of the barley sheaf during the Passover observances. The festival of Weeks or Pentecost marked the beginning of the offering of the first fruits of the harvest, so it was an agricultural celebration honoring God for the gift of the crops of the harvest and a celebration dedicating a portion of those crops to God. In the midst of this great gathering of Jews from all over the world, God gives the apostles the gift of tongues so as to enable them to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in the languages of all those who were there. What a miracle of communication that was! .



Pentecost, then, points to God's desire that all persons all over the world be given the opportunity to hear the gospel addressed to them in their own situation, in the way they can hear it best, understand it best, and best put it into practice. Pentecost points to the fact that God comes to us in our circumstances—no matter who we are or where we are—and presents himself to us in ways we can comprehend. God communicates who he is and how we should live in relation to him. Pentecost symbolizes through an event that it is God's nature to communicate openly, clearly, honestly, and completely with us, meeting us where we are in language we can hear.

Pentecost also points to the inclusive nature of the gospel and God's desire to unite all persons in the community of faith. The gift and demand of God's love always have been presented in ways and means that were meant to show the inclusive nature of God's love. That is to say, God's love is meant for all persons, and that love always has been presented by God in a way that is supposed to communicate its inclusive nature.

At Pentecost, as we have mentioned already, we see the beginning of the Church, yet another inclusive act. It is the Church's responsibility to demonstrate how deep and wide, how far-reaching, how boundless, how limitless is God's love for all, not just some, but all people.

Pentecost is about God's inclusive love, a love that reaches out to everyone and seeks to embrace all persons as children of God.

*Excerpts from "What Pentecost Points To" by Dr. David T. Howeth*

