

Sermon for Pentecost  
May 11, 2008

Acts 2:1-21  
Psalm 104:25-35,37  
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13  
John 20:19-23

Today is Pentecost and Mothers Day and Founders Day. Thirteen years ago today, the people who founded this church celebrated a new thing, a new member in the body of Christ: Church of the Holy Cross, Episcopal. The Spirit of the Lord settled on this gathering.

Nearly 2,000 years ago the Spirit of the Lord settled on the first member of the Body that Paul wrote of. The Holy Spirit came down and all who heard understood. The confusion and turmoil that flowed from the Tower of Babel when humanity was scattered by its inability to understand the languages of others turns around and everyone hears the word in their native language. The Holy Spirit unites them, and that small group of followers of Jesus become what will be the Church. The Holy Spirit gives birth to the body of Christ, so it is appropriate that today, this also is Mothers Day.

This may seem like a rhetorical question, but how many of you have read the Harry Potter books or seen the Harry Potter movies?

I bring this up because Harry Potter and the stories in the books by J.K. Rowling kept popping into my head as I read the lessons the last month or so.

It started with the reading of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. The same letter we read from today. You know, the earlier chapter about the gifts of the spirit. Paul reminds the Corinthians that all of the gifts, no matter the manifestation, are gifts of the same spirit.

That passage reminded me of the sorting hat at Hogwarts. As the hat sank over each new pupil, it would verbalize the traits of the student to be and decided which of the four houses of the school the pupil would be assigned to based on those traits. Each house has its own strengths and weaknesses, but each house is an essential part of the school.

As we read beyond today's epistle, Paul moves from the gifts of the spirit, to talk about the church as the body of Christ, and how each member of the body, whether hand or foot or head or whatever, are essential to the health of the body.

The gift that the sorting hat recognized in Harry Potter was bravery and daring, the hallmark of the House of Gryphendor. In Harry Potter, we have a boy who is renowned nearly from birth, marked by the scar left by the evil Valdemort, chosen to face absolute evil to save those who will not serve the Dark Wizard.

After reading all of the Harry Potter books, I see the series of stories in the same light as C.S. Lewis' cherished Chronicles of Narnia. Children are called upon to become warriors in the fight against the evil ice queen. Similarly, the heroes of the Harry Potter stories are children, called upon to perform heroic acts that would challenge most adults.

Woven through the Harry Potter stories are the recurring themes of challenge and triumph, weakness and temptation, betrayal and redemption. And finally good must face evil and the good must be willing to sacrifice all and die that the world might be saved.

Do you remember the gift that saved Harry Potter's life more than once? The gift that would not allow Valdemort to kill him? That last gift that his mother bestowed on him, the love she held for her son, a love so strong that she was willing to give up her life to save her son from death. That is the weapon Harry carried with him throughout the series.

Love is the gift that the Holy Spirit has given to each of us. We are granted that most wonderful of loves from God and Christ: the willingness to die so that we might live.

We have been given the Holy Spirit to provide us with the gifts from God that we share with each other in the Body of Christ.

Today of all days, let us pray for those gifts of the Spirit that we might live as members of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A Prayer for the Seven-Fold Gifts of the Spirit**

Christ Jesus, before ascending into heaven, You promised to send the Holy Spirit to Your apostles and disciples. Grant that the same Spirit may perfect in our lives the work of Your grace and love.

- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Wisdom and supernatural light that we may not only know God's infinite goodness, power and beauty, but also taste with ardent joy his infinite sweetness, and aspire to the things that last forever;
- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Understanding and shining light that we may know the mysteries of faith and heavenly things, that our minds will be enlightened with the light of Your truth;
- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Counsel and brilliant light that in danger and doubt we may choose what is right and good and the surest way of doing Your will, seeking first the Kingdom;
- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Fortitude and comforting light that we may bear our cross with You and, with courage, overcome all obstacles to our salvation, resist all temptations, and bear patiently all the troubles and trials of this life;
- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Knowledge and discerning light that we may judge all things according to their true worth, and thereby know You and know ourselves and grow in holiness;
- ✝ Grant us the Spirit of Piety and heavenly light that a tender devotion to You may penetrate our souls that we may find peace and fulfillment in the service of God and by serving others;

✝ Grant us the Spirit of the Awe of The Lord God and penetrating light that we may be filled with a loving reverence toward You.

Teach us to be Your faithful disciples and animate us in every good way with Your Holy Spirit.

*Amen.*

Adapted from St. Augustine's Prayer Book