**Pentecost, June 8, 2014, Acts 2: 1-21; Ps 104; 1 Corinthians 12:3-13; John 20:19-23; Rev Mary Trainor**

There I was ten days ago, breathless after climbing all 100 steep stairs on the hiking trail in a national park. It was an interpretive trail to show the five complex vertical layers of the temperate rain forest, and the only way to see it all is to take those stairs from the soil to the canopy. The air deep in the forest was still and the temperature was warm; not enough oxygen! Two days later, I was standing on a corner walking in an industrial area near a big city airport -- and again, I thought I was turning blue from lack of oxygen - but this time it was because of highly polluted air from all the truck, bus, car traffic congested before me. The air quality was so poor. On the day in between these two, I stood on a clear beach where there was a lovely breeze - and I breathed in the fresh clean oxygen filled air. I felt so very alive and healthy, in contrast to those other two times of oxygen deprivation! Take a deep breath now, breathing in our clear clean Shawano air, hold that breath, then exhale it slowly.

Have you ever seen a photo of the air in Mexico City or in Bejing? Their air quality is so bad, that people walk around with masks on -- and many cannot go out of their homes for fear of getting sick from the polluted air.

Breathing is something that we take for granted, until we can't take it for granted any longer when we are out of breath either because of bad air or bad lungs. It is only then that we really appreciate it! And then, we really really do. Why am I talking about breathing this morning at church? The word breath is found 51 times in the bible, beginning with the 2nd chapter of Genesis where God ***breathed the breath of life*** into Adam and Eve. In our Gospel today, Jesus was with the disciples and : "***he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit*.’” This kind of breath that is the breath of God is a different than the breath we get from the air we breathe, but it is vital too. It is the breath which is the Spirit of God, it is the source of both spiritual peace, power, and inspiration. We can't see the breath of God any more than we can see the air we breathe, yet both are real. Today, Pentecost Sunday, is the birthday of the church when we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. On this day, when the apostles were gathered, "*suddenly from heaven there came a sound like a rush of a violent wind. Divided tongues as of fire appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.*" Wow -- can you imagine seeing that! Jesus had told them He would do this, and He did. But Pentecost is not just a day when we are spectators about what Jesus did 2000 years ago for the apostles, it has to do with you today! Before Pentecost, the Spirit only filled a few people: the prophets. But after this day, anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord is able to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That means you and me -- today.**

Living with the Holy Spirit is like being seamlessly hooked up to a power source that gives you joy and the ability to do extraordinary things for God. When we are living our lives filled with the breath of God, things are different, as we saw in our Acts reading today. The apostles seemed so different that some thought they were "***filled with new wine***" - people thought they were drunk! Peter tells people that they are not drunk but rather full of the Spirit; he quotes from the prophet Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit. Our problem is that sometimes we breath the wrong spiritual air: we don't breathe in the Holy Spirit. When we choose to do this, we turn blue inside and lose the joy of the Lord, lose our ability to live as Christians with God's help, and we see the world through different eyes. We see the world with a sense of fear, isolation, inadequacy. When we serve God without the Spirit, we feel drained.

If we breathe in the Holy Spirit, as we breathe in our wonderful Shawano air every day -- we will live with that peace that Jesus blessed the apostles with. That peace comes with it a deep sense of purpose and joy and calmness no matter what is going on in your life. The Holy Spirit brings us gifts too, as outlined in our 1st Corinthians reading today: we each have spiritual gifts that God has given us. This past winter, we here at St John's each had the opportunity to figure out our spiritual gifts through a written inventory *(let me know if you missed this want a copy).* These gifts are given to us not to build ourselves up, but we are told by Paul they are to build up God's people, they are about sharing, they are "***for the common good.***" They range from wisdom and knowledge to healing and prophecy. We use these gifts when we pray, when we reach out to those in need, when we make new friends, when we encourage and accept others, when we forgive others, when we are generous. You have at least one of these gifts! We are told that "***All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,***" they are made active in you when call upon the Holy Spirit, when you choose with your free will to breathe in the breath of God.

In 1910, Agnes was born - she was the youngest of five children and there was nothing extraordinary about her. She is described as shy, quiet, and ordinary. Because her father died when she was a teenager, money got tight and to obtain an education she went to school in Ireland with the sisters of Loreto. She ended up teaching high school geography and history for 15 years. Nothing extraordinary here either. But at the age of 38, filled with the Holy Spirit she dropped the life of a teacher and launched out on her own to care for the poorest of the poor in Calcutta. Yes, I am speaking of Mother Teresa, who later started the new order of nuns, the Sisters of Charity, who are now throughout the world. Agnes was an ordinary person who did extraordinary things for the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit. You and I are ordinary people who are called to do extraordinary things for the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit.Mother Teresa said, "A joyful heart is like a sunshine of God's love. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love. I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world."

Let us now pray this a special prayer from the Book of Common Prayer for us to receive a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit: **Almighty and most merciful God, grant that by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit we may be enlightened and strengthened for your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen**.