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Pentecost Sunday
Peace, Seattle
June 12, 2011 epk
Acts 2:1-21, John 7:37-39

FIRE AND WATER

[SING:] ***"When you send forth your Spirit, we are renewed, we are renewed!"***[1]

I love that psalm! Love the lively setting; love the truth it speaks of our utter dependence on the Spirit of God to sustain the life of all things living; and I love the way it demands deep breathing if we're to sing it with the gusto is requires.

In the beginning, the Scriptures say, God, bending low, scooped up some good brown clay, molded it into human form, breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and made AH-DAM a living being, a living soul.

*Now indulge me for a moment…**TAKE A BREATH WITH ME…SLOW AND DEEP…***[ready? Breathe...]

Now, breathe again, recognizing this breath as God's breath, God's Spirit... [ready? Breathe…]

O.K.—one more time, with gratitude for what breath means to you and to all the living…breathe…]

When I was young, I would test myself at the community pool by seeing how far I could swim under water with one breath.

- Could I make it ½ way across? Three quarters? A full length?
- How long could I hold my breath before my lungs demanded more?
- How long could I push back panic to take one more stroke?

Water and breath—we need them both in this life. And today we celebrate them both—the WATERS of BAPTISM and the BREATH of the SPIRIT who calls us through these waters to a GOD-BREATHED LIFE…

- To a life where there's as much room as we need to breathe, to be ourselves fully,
- to laugh, to cry, to venture forth—
- and to do so not alone, not as a solitary individual, but with others by our side, with a whole community breathing *in* love, and *exhaling* mercy; knowing we have been named, claimed, loved, and gifted as we reach for the opposite shore.

WATER & BREATH are woven deeply into the fabric of our life in Christ, a LIFE we celebrate today with the baptisms of six precious people and the entry of two new families into our common life and mission here at Peace.

But there is a THIRD ELEMENT that's also woven into the Word God speaks to us this Pentecost Sunday. That word is FIRE.

Luke speaks of "divided tongues as of fire" appearing among God's people, resting upon them and igniting within them a desire and ability to testify to the mighty acts of God, propelling them into lives of witness and service that, literally, reshape and transform the world.

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[1] Psalm 104, text and music copyright © 1987 Ray Makeever, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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FIRE AND WATER.

If you want to see what happens when FIRE AND WATER mix, go to the Big Island of Hawaii.

There, on the south edge of Kilauea—Hawaii's youngest and one of the world's most active volcanoes—you can witness lava flows with temperatures over 2000 degrees, turning ocean waves to instant steam & sometimes blasting rocks, water, & fragments of molten lava high into the air.

The oldest dated rocks from Kilauea are only 23,000 years old—much younger, in geologic terms, than little Landon, Benjamin, and Connor are in developmental terms.[2]

Where volcanoes meet the sea, new land is formed, inch by inch, and unexpected discoveries are being made.

At one site in the western Pacific, a deep-sea volcano has become a hotspot for a booming population of ocean critters, despite continuous eruptions at the site. How this could be is a puzzle to those who are studying it. A hot, acidic environment seems like the last place marine life would thrive, but this volcano tells another story, for it supports a surprising abundance and variety of life.[3]

A fascinating new discovery, yes? Yet, from a faith perspective, we could say this is not new at all.

In fact, we could say that what we're witnessing today in these texts, and what we'll soon witness at this FONT, is ALWAYS what happens when streams of LIVING WATER and FLAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT mix—which is to say, new life, animated life, rife with possibility and potential.

The Lord whom we praise today is the one who makes all this possible, and once more he is calling us to the font, to the place where new life is formed.

Parents, sponsors and families, God has gifted you with these little ones and is entrusting you now with the responsibility of raising them wet; raising them to grow in their relationship with their Lord in, with, and through the community of faith, with the Holy Spirit as your creative partner and guide.

We, the people of Peace, pledge to partner with you on that journey, in good times and in hard times. For we know that Baptism is no insurance policy against life's struggles and challenges.

The world wants our faith, wants our allegiance; above all wants to define who we are and what we need to be whole; and is ready to use every tool at its disposal to make that happen.

But we know better. We know that in this water, by God's word, we are already whole, for we've been washed and forgiven, named and claimed by a Lord whose love knows no bounds. The life to which we're called today, of living water and spirited flame, is no docile life. It demands much from us. But it offers – OH! – so much more!

This font may not look like much on the scale of the world's reckoning. This water may not seem so very deep or powerful. But it is infused with the God's promise: I AM WITH YOU! YOU ARE MINE!

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[2] From the USGS Kilauea Volcano website: http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov/kilauea/

[3] Follow these links to articles about thriving life near an underwater volcano off the coast of Guam: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30582524/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/life-thrives-active-underwater-volcano/ OR http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/05/090505111702.htm

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A promise powerful enough to raise Jesus from the tomb—and it will raise us, too, one day.

WATER – BREATH – SPIRIT – FIRE. It's all here, and we're here, and God is hear, calling to us…

> "I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old,
> I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold."[4]

Please stand and join in our hymn of the day, #732 in the red hymnal, BORNING CRY.

[4] *Borning Cry*. Text and music © 1985 John C. Ylvisaker. Published as hymn # 732 in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006)