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“He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ” (John 20:23).

Pentecost marks the liturgical harvest of what was planted on Passover 50 days ago. The seed that falls to the ground and dies now bursts into life and multiplies its grain one hundredfold. The death of Jesus was the seed of the New Creation, and he now breathes abundant life into his followers, the church.

Pentecost is when the densely packed mystery of his life, death and resurrection unfolds into the world, reclaiming it for God, restoring the divine image as the basis for all human dignity. “As it was in the beginning, now and forever,” Christ reveals us to ourselves, freeing us from sin and death to claim our divine destiny.

We need consider only a few of the themes overflowing from this solemnity to glimpse the whole pattern.

Diversity is how creation grows. To define, divide and distinguish the world into competing parts, favoring some, rejecting others, is to limit the dream, destroy the fullness of community, impoverish our shared potential. The song needs the breath of every living thing, every voice and every tongue to reveal the harmony of God’s will uniting heaven and earth, the symphony within our shared DNA.

Reconciliation is the power to heal divisions. “Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you forgive are forgiven.” Mercy is the mission of the church, not judgment or righteousness. God is honored only by unconditional love, a welcoming Table, wounded healers and servant leaders who go to the margins to find the lost and

bring home the outcast.

The Spirit always exceeds our predictions and plans, our goals and objectives and our need for institutional order and control. The Spirit is pure surprise, revealing to little ones what is hidden from the wise and clever. The Spirit comes and goes freely in the winds of human encounter, the grace of the moment, the dangerous memory and the risky response to the immediate need. Jesus is always here and now, but on the move to there and then, more verb or metaphor than noun or fact, more poem than program.

We do not celebrate Pentecost; it seizes us and challenges us to expand our lives, to set aside our fears and let our hearts overflow with love.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

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