

(Brenna Davis)



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PAUSE

This week's reflections focus on fire.

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> *There is within us a fundamental dis-ease, an unquenchable fire that renders us incapable, in this life, of ever coming to full peace. This desire lies at the center of our lives, in the marrow of our bones, and in the deep recesses of the soul. At the heart of all great literature, poetry, art, philosophy, psychology, and religion lies the naming and analyzing of this desire.*
>
> *Spirituality is, ultimately, about what we do with that desire. What we do with our longings, both in terms of handling the pain and the hope they bring us, that is our spirituality. ... Spirituality is about what we do with our unrest. ... Everyone has to have a spirituality and everyone does have one, either a life-giving one or a destructive one.*

— Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*

> *When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.*

— Acts 2:1-4

REFLECT

The sun is shining on my face as I sit on my porch and type. I close my eyes and appreciate its warmth as the cooler autumnal temperatures have finally, thankfully, arrived. Living in a place that can go long periods of time without a sunny day, I am grateful for the fire of the sun when it is around, especially as my mood and energy

levels often drop in the winter months without its light. Sometimes on a day like today, the afternoon light will stream through a window in such a particular way that I stop in wonder at what Merton calls the "the cosmic dance."

The sun is a miracle. It provides the exact intensity of warmth needed for life to exist on Earth. Plants are fed from the sun's rays through photosynthesis, and through a fascinating process that I've honestly never thought much about until now, humans are able to produce vitamin D that strengthens our bones through exposure to sunlight.

The discovery of fire changed the course of human history. In one sense, this fire has allowed humanity to make amazing advancements that we benefit from today: electricity, access to life-saving technology, even the Internet where you're reading this reflection now.

We also know that fire can be destructive, and we feel this acutely as wildfires continue to rage on the West Coast of the United States. Burning unprecedented quantities of fossil fuels, a gift from the bodies of plants and animals that previously inhabited the Earth, has allowed some parts of the world to prosper while also speeding up climate change, often with disproportionate impacts on communities that have consumed the least.

Fire also has spiritual facets. The Holy Spirit is depicted as fire at Pentecost, and this fire helped the earliest followers of Jesus use their voices to spread the Gospel message in the midst of uncertainty. Like the disciples, we, too, are being called to speak courageously as we imagine a new way of being in relationship with nature, one in which we depend on the elements of the sun and wind instead of fossil fuels.

Our spirituality is our own internal fire and energy that moves us to act in response to our pain and our hope. As we consider the pain and hope we hold for the world right now, we must tend the embers of the spiritual fires that sustain us so that we can continue to share our light, unique gifts, and passions with the world. Only by tending these internal flames can we slow the exterior fires and illuminate a life-giving path forward.

- What gifts has the element of fire provided you?
- Where or how do you connect with the element of fire where you live?

- How is God inviting you to channel the "unquenchable fire" inside of you to create the world you desire?

ACT

- If it is sunny where you are today, take a few moments pause and intentionally feel the warmth and energy of the sun on your face today.
- If there isn't sunshine in your area today, place a hand on your chest (if you are able) and pause to feel the warmth of your skin and the energy of your heartbeat. Share a prayer of gratitude for the unique fire and desires that God has placed in your heart.

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