

Pentecost



Priests like talking with people, at least most of the time. The person most priests fear talking to are what are referred to as “recovering Catholics,” those who have left the church and can give you a hundred reasons why they left – The Crusades, the Inquisition, bad popes, Vatican conspiracies, degradation of women, pedophile priests, cover-up bishops, non-acceptance of same sex marriages, money scandals, dull sermons, and the list goes on and on. And after I listen to someone like that I wonder sometimes if they might be right. Then I question myself. Why do I stay in the Church?

Before he ascended into heaven Jesus promised his little band of followers that he would not leave them orphaned. He would send the Spirit, the same Spirit which came upon the apostles in the upper room like a strong driving wind. It is that same Spirit who is given to us in baptism and whose gifts are activated through confirmation. We have not been left orphans, left to fend for ourselves. We have the Spirit who is always there for us.

There is a folk tale from Haiti. As you listen, think about Pentecost.

Once upon a time, in the middle of a great forest there lived an old woman who made her living by keeping bees. By the end of the summer she had more honey than she knew what to do with. She decided to take it to market and sell it. She carried the honey in a pot on top of her head. As she made her way through the forest she accidentally tripped over a tree root and went flying. The pot fell off her head and crashed to the ground, breaking into a hundred pieces. As the sweet sticky honey oozed on the ground the woman sat there and began to cry. “Oh misery! God you sent me too much misery. After a while she got up and walked back home crying “O misery! O God you sent me too much misery.”

Now it happened that a little monkey was sitting in the tree over whose roots the woman tripped. He looked at the strange sticky stuff and cautiously dipped his finger in the sweet goo. He

exclaimed, "Oh. This misery tastes so good. He couldn't get enough. Then it was all gone. The monkey wanted more. He thought, "Maybe God might give me some misery as he gave that woman." So the little monkey asked God for some misery. God said, "You want misery?" "Yes" said the monkey, "as much as you can give me." God thought for a minute and said, "It just so happens I have misery made just for monkeys. Are you sure you want it?" The monkey nodded his head and after a while God returned carrying a leather bag. "Here, this bag is full of misery. You must carry it through the great, sandy desert where there are no trees, in fact where they can't grow. Once you're there, slowly open the bag and you'll find more misery than you ever dreamed of. So the monkey took the leather bag and ran deep into the desert where he sat down exhausted. His hand was shaking in anticipation of finally having misery. He opened the bag and out jumped seven big hungry dogs. The monkey screamed, dropped the bag and began running, the dogs nipping at his tail. He ran and ran and just at the point he thought he could run no more a tree appeared, right in the middle of the desert, where trees cannot grow. He scampered up the tree as fast as he could and spent the rest of the day up in the tree branches, leaving the dogs leaping up and down on the ground. He stayed up there the rest of the day and into the night when finally the dogs gave up and left. He climbed down and ran for the forest as fast as he could.

Now the question – the Pentecostal question – Where did that tree come from? Who put that great tree where trees don't grow? God put it there. Why? Because God knows too much misery is not a good thing, even for a monkey. And so we rejoice in the mercies and put up with the miseries of our church because we believe that, true to Jesus' promise the always present Spirit continues to grow trees where they don't grow.