

*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love. In the Name of God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The disciples heard a sound like the rush of a violent wind.

The winds of change are like that.

In an instant, the followers of Jesus are no longer a group of a few dozen. The Spirit brings to them a gift of languages. Now, the message of God's love cannot be hindered. The confusion of Babel is rendered obsolete.

The rush sounded violent, says author Luke. I've heard violent wind, having lived through a tornado that passed through the space between my childhood home and our neighbors. You don't hear the wind so much as you hear the destruction in the wind. You hear the chaos of tree limbs breaking, windows shattering, doors slamming. Wind is a force to be reckoned with. There's always clean-up to do after a windstorm.

I've also heard wind that sounded like the engagement of an air-conditioning system in the middle of a convention center in Columbus, Ohio, in 2006. Well, that's what a person might have called it if they didn't understand the magnitude of what had just happened in that massive room.

There was chaos. Stained glass ceilings broke. Tradition expanded. The message of God's love poured out over the public address system announcing that the new presiding bishop was – A WOMAN! Oh yes. The Spirit is a force to be reckoned with! And, yes, there was clean-up to do after that Holy Spirit wind blew through the church.

How quickly we forget that the Holy Spirit forces change and brings chaos wherever and whenever She presents Herself. It seems benign, that moment of epiclesis, when we ask that the Spirit come down upon elements of bread and wine and turn them into the food that saves and soothes and empowers us.

How bold we are to request the Holy Spirit's presence fill the life of little River Eve this day. (Or the four who were baptized two weeks ago!) Do we really mean for the lives of these children to be turned 'round and 'round? Why do we dare ask God to unleash this power upon adults, let alone innocent children?

We dare because it is God's plan for us and the world. It is God's plan that we become a part of the love that made us to such extent that we feel compelled to share it in our words and in our deeds.

How do we know this?

Well, it's because we pray for it to happen, of course! And, it's one of my favorite prayers in the entire Prayer Book!

[turn to page 308] Just between the time where a person is baptized with water and the time where a person is sealed with blessed oil, there is a prayer.

In that prayer is God's plan for all of us:

To have an inquiring and discerning heart.

God's plan requires us to ask questions, doubt with a purpose, and use our intellect to figure out what's good for us and what's not good for us.

To have the courage to will and to persevere

God knows that life is going to give us a bunch of challenges along the way. We need courage to go on, especially when the challenges seem to overwhelm us.

To have a spirit to know and love God

God doesn't force us to return the love we've been given. We must choose to return that love. We must choose to get to know God.

To have the gift of joy and wonder in all God's works.

It's really easy to appreciate the sunny days, the times when that kid of yours is angelic, the days when everything is going great. So, when it's raining, or when the kids a mess, or you just want to pull the covers up over your head, it may take a little effort to see the joy.

But God brings the rain and the kids are still a gift, and today's disappointment will teach you something you will need later on.

How can we not be in wonder?

Have you ever taken that prayer away with you after a baptism? If not, I hope you will today.

Be cautious though – that rush of wind you hear may just be the Spirit bringing a change to your life. There will be chaos. There will need clean-up. There will be new creation.

Are you ready? Put on your hard hat!