

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



A promise kept

From the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, the apostle Thomas surveyed the crowded street below. Many godly Hebrews from different countries had come to the city to observe Pentecost. In accordance with Jewish law, they brought the first fruits of their harvest to the temple, where they presented these gifts to the priest in thanksgiving to God.

Thomas had been watching this scene for some time when Matthew joined him. All of the apostles had gathered in this house to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus had promised would empower His followers in their work of preaching the gospel.

"I don't think there were this many people in Jerusalem for Passover," Thomas remarked. "Would this not be the perfect moment for the Spirit to come?"

"The time has already been set by God," Matthew replied. "It is not for us to determine."

"You've changed!" Thomas said, laughing. "I've never seen you so patient. Aren't you feeling at all anxious to continue the Master's work?"

"Not as much as I am feeling afraid," Matthew admitted. "I fear that I won't measure up. I want Jesus to be pleased with me."

"There's nothing to worry about, Matthew. When the Spirit comes, we'll be given the strength to tell Jesus' story," Thomas said. "Jesus promised us that."

"Yes," Matthew agreed. "I know I'm foolish to worry. Come now, we will share a meal in Jesus' memory."

Everyone gathered around the table for the evening meal. It was almost like the Passover meal they had shared in this same room with Jesus. They prayed together in thanksgiving, and then John blessed the bread and broke it, saying: "Jesus, we partake of this bread and wine in remembrance of you. Please help us to be faithful to the work you have given us." Then John passed a portion of bread and wine to all present.

Early the next morning, a mighty wind-storm began. The great roaring in the sky seemed to center directly above the house

where Jesus' followers had assembled. A large crowd of people rushed to the house to see what had brought the storm. Just as they arrived, they saw what appeared to be flames or tongues of fire over the heads of those present in the house.

The apostles and those who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit came forward to explain to the crowd what had happened. The onlookers — who had come to Jerusalem from such distant regions as Egypt, Rome, Mesopotamia and Crete — were amazed that the apostles were speaking in so many different languages. So the crowd became even more confused.

Finally, Peter addressed the crowd, and each person understood exactly what was said. "What you have seen in Jerusalem today is not the result of trickery. The prophet Joel long ago predicted that God would send His Spirit upon His servants. Jesus of Nazareth again made this promise before he ascended to His Father."

Peter told the crowd that Jesus was the Messiah, but that He was condemned to die because the Jewish leaders handed Him over to the Roman authorities. The Romans nailed Him to a cross and murdered Him. But this, too, was part of God's plan. Jesus conquered death by rising from the dead three days later, and He now has sent the Holy Spirit so that His followers can continue to do His work, Peter explained. All who believe in Jesus will receive both the gift of eternal life and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"You must turn your backs on sin," Peter advised the crowd, "and be baptized into the family of those who follow Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit will come to you, and you will be given the power to be witnesses for Jesus."

On that day in Jerusalem, more than 3,000 people became followers of Jesus. They joined with many others in coming to the communion services and prayer meetings held by the apostles, who had been filled with great joy and peace, as Jesus had promised.

Scripture reference: Acts 2, Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-13. What special gifts has God given you, so that you can help others?

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



Breath of God

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 20:19-23; (R1) Acts 2:1-11; (R2) 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13.

Do you know what every one of us does 16 times a minute without often even being aware of it? Unaware, I say, unless we have asthma, a cold, an allergy or emphysema, or live in Los Angeles.

We breathe approximately 16 times a minute, and usually without a second thought. Sixteen times a minute, we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide in a natural rhythm that started when the doctor whacked us on the backside at birth — and the process continues until we draw our last breath.

What a marvelous thing this is! What an apparatus God has given us, just to enable us to breathe! We can start with that protuberance which is "as plain as the nose on your face" — the nose itself.

Had Cleopatra's nose been an inch longer, the history of the Roman Empire might have been changed. Cyrano de Bergerac's nose inspired Edmund Rostand's dramatic play.

No matter, the nose is a wonderful creation. It has two openings, the nostrils, through which we breathe in air. The nostrils are separated by a wall of gristle and bone, called the septum. On the side walls of the nose are bafflelike protrusions called turbinates, to moisten and warm the air we breathe. Inside the nose are fine hairs, known as cilia, designed to filter the air before it reaches the lungs, which are, of course, the basic organs of breathing. Each lung has about 375 million air cells.

Breathing, as you might well imagine, was a deep mystery before science reasoned things out. When the Bible speaks of God creating the first man, it says, He "blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being."

Next Sunday is Pentecost. On that wonderful day, the Holy Spirit, the *pneuma* (breath) of God, was inhaled by the apostles and the Church. This Spirit in turn was exhaled in prayer tongues and later in fearless preaching.

The late John Courtney Murray said that Pentecost was a conspiracy of God. He was using the word "conspiracy" in its root sense of a "breathing together" (*con* meaning "with," and *spirare* meaning "to

breathe"). Pentecost was a conspiracy, not in the sense of a sinister gathering for dark purposes, but of a "getting together" of the Holy Spirit and the Church for the noble purpose of evangelizing the world. The breath of God, the Holy Spirit, breathed into this gathering the power and enlightenment to proclaim the good news of the resurrection.

It was like a "breath of fresh air" when Jesus breathed upon the apostles and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." John was playing on words. "He breathed on them," or exhaled the Holy Spirit. He then invited the apostles to inhale the breath of God or "receive the Holy Spirit." On this occasion, the Spirit gave the Church the power to forgive sins, a power that belongs to God alone.

On May 18, 1986, the Feast of Pentecost, Pope John Paul II issued his fifth encyclical. It was on the Holy Spirit in the Church: *Dominum et Vivificantem* — "The Lord and Life-giver."

"Lord" tells us that the Holy Spirit is God. And "life-giver" tell us what He does.

I used to ask children, "What's light as a feather, and you can't hold it for ten minutes?" The answer is your breath. That is how important the Holy Spirit is in our lives. He is as necessary to our spiritual life as the air we breathe is to our physical life.

Devotion to the Holy Spirit, therefore, is imperative; and the measure of our spiritual progress will be in proportion to the measure of our devotion to Him. How much water we draw from a well will depend on the size of the receptacle we bring to the well. We can bring a thimble, a bucket or a milk tanker.

Similarly, what we receive from the Holy Spirit will depend on our devotion, our wants, our desires for Him. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness, for the Holy Spirit..." We must ask ourselves what is the size of our desires? How deeply do we breathe in, crave for the Holy Spirit?

Are we short of breath today? Pentecost invites us to take a deep breath and receive the Holy Spirit.

Notice that Jesus said, "Receive!" The Holy Spirit is forced upon no one. We must "inhale" Him. To receive, therefore, is as easy as taking a deep breath — and as vital to the preservation of life.

Obituaries

Lifelong Geneva resident Mary Elizabeth Clarke, nursing educator

Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Clarke, of 360 Castle St., Geneva, died Monday, May 18, 1987, in Geneva General Hospital, following an extended illness.

Monsignor Gerard Krieg and Father Leo Reinhardt concelebrated the Mass of Christian Burial at St. Stephen's Church on Wednesday, May 20. Burial was in St. Mary's Cemetery. Mrs. Clarke lived in Geneva all her life, and

was the daughter of the late James and Minnie Taro Mooney.

She was a graduate of DeSales High School and a 1933 graduate of the Geneva Registered Nursing School. Mrs. Clarke later graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor of science degree in school-nurse teaching and soon after received a master of science degree in elementary teaching from SU.

She was a school nurse at Oakfield Central School, Clyde Central School and in the Geneva school system. She also taught elementary school grades in the Seneca Falls public school system and later taught learning disability classes in the Geneva public school system, before retiring in 1974.

A parishioner of St. Stephen's Church, Mrs. Clarke was also a member of the Alumni Association of the Geneva Registered Nursing

School and the Geneva Teachers Alumni Association.

The family requests memorial contributions be made to the DeSales High Alumni Association or St. Stephen's or St. Francis Churches.

Mrs. Clarke is survived by her husband, Francis; two sisters, Mrs. Gordon (Armenia) Holbig of Albany and Mrs. Ralph (Florence) Calabrese of Las Vegas; and several nieces and nephews.

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Sister Frances Raphael Reisdorf of Auburn, beloved for dedication to primary education

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Frances Raphael Reisdorf of the Sisters of St. Joseph was celebrated in the motherhouse chapel on Wednesday, May 13, by Father Albert Shamon. Assisting Father Shamon were Fathers Thomas Mull (who delivered the eulogy), James Marvin, Michael Conboy, Albert Delmonte, George Heyman, Frederick Helfrich, Richard Shatzel and Monsignor William H. Shannon, and Deacon Kenneth Scarcotta. Also present were Fathers Joseph Donovan and Gary Tyman.

Sister Frances Raphael was taken ill in early April of this year, and her condition deteriorated rapidly until her death on Monday, May 11, 1987.

A native of Auburn, Sister Frances Raphael entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Aloysius parish in 1927. She began teaching in the

Diocese of Rochester in 1929, and was actively engaged in the teaching ministry until April 3 of this year.

She taught at Corpus Christi School from 1929 to 1939; St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport, from 1939 to 1961; St. Jerome, East Rochester, from 1961 to 1965; and St. Ambrose from 1965 until 1987. Sister Frances Raphael taught at the primary level, mainly in grade one. She had a full classroom until 1972, when she then served as a classroom assistant until her sudden illness in April of this year.

She was known for relating easily to her students, and was greatly loved by both children and parents.

Sister Frances Raphael is survived by three sisters: Sister Rose Irene Reisdorf SSI, Mrs. Clarence (Rose) Hayden, and Elizabeth Reisdorf of Auburn.