

Pouring Out the Spirit

Scripture Reflection



Water is incredibly significant in the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity as well as other world religions. The Bible begins and ends with important references to water. In between, water plays major roles in dozens of critical stories and poetic expressions about God's Spirit. In this exercise, we will explore the water images in the Pentecost readings as they relate to the person of the Holy Spirit.

Reflection One: Joel

Scripture

"I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." Joel 3:1 (Vigil of Pentecost)

Dreaming dreams and seeing visions are big concepts that transcend the limits of age. It doesn't matter how old or how young you are, when God pours the Spirit into you like a cool life-giving glass of water, you see the apparently unreachable potential of human goodness.

Reflection

- What is your greatest dream for humanity?
- Hold your dream up to the gospel and the vision of the Church. Is there harmony between your dream and the dream of Jesus, which is expressed in the gospels and through the Church?

- Does your dream seem impractical? If so, you are on the right track. A dream or a vision is not a dream or a vision unless it seems unattainable. A five-year plan is a practical tool that is reasonably attainable, but it is not a dream or a vision; at best, it can only help you take a small step toward a dream or a vision. If your dream or vision is something that is doable within five or ten years – or even a lifetime – then you still aren't dreaming big enough. Sit quietly and take some time to let your dream develop. Don't rush it. Allow God time to prepare your drink of the Spirit and pour it into your depths.
- Rejoice in the flowing river of your vision – it is your gift to humanity – and pray that God will guide you toward it in some small and simple way.

Reflection Two: John

Scripture

"On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive." John 7:37-38 (Vigil of Pentecost)

There are few things that can bind people together the way water can. All living

organisms are made up of 50%-90% water with humans weighing in at the upper level of those percentages. We all have water in common. When a body is low on water, the thirst that it experiences drives a person into a relentless hunt for a drink. Nothing will satisfy the thirst like water will. Jesus is calling out to the spiritually thirsty. Just as everyone thirsts for H₂O, we also regularly thirst for the Spirit. We naturally crave for and need the presence of God's Spirit in our lives even more than we crave for and need water. Our craving for and our need for water is a symbol of our desire and absolute need for the Holy Spirit. Jesus can and wants to fill our thirsty souls.

Reflection

- What is your craving? For what do you really thirst?
We have many basic, physical cravings every day. These cravings for food, water, entertainment, shopping, sports, fame, power, alcohol, or even religious ceremony are cravings that move us into action. When we have a craving we seek to satisfy it as soon as possible, but satisfying a basic, physical craving brings only temporary satisfaction. The craving returns soon after we fill the emptiness. Let your physical craving be a sign for you of your deeper craving for the Spirit. Do not rush to fill your physical craving, particularly an unnecessary one. Be patient and sit with the craving, allowing it to take you to your deeper spiritual craving. There are only two ultimate cravings in life: our craving for God and our craving for human love. All other cravings are signs and metaphors that are given to us to help us understand the dynamics of spiritual thirst and its fulfillment. We must be careful not to miss the deeper spiritual point when we crave for and fulfill our physical cravings, or we may turn things into gods.

Reflection Three: 1 Corinthians

Scripture

"The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (Feast of Pentecost)

It is the baptismal water that slakes our spiritual thirst. The baptismal water binds us to God and to the community of believers – the Church. It gives us all that we really need: the love of God and the love of our community. All other life necessities flow from these two. Paul teaches us that there is a profound unity among those who drink of the baptismal Spirit. No matter how different we may appear, we are equal in dignity, that is, we are equal in God's loving eyes. This dictate is a challenge to us to honor that equal dignity even in the midst of our widely different roles and states in the community.

Reflection

- How do you honor the equal dignity of those who are in your social, family and work settings?
- How have you failed to honor that dignity?
- Drinking of the Spirit through baptism calls you to open your heart to daily transformation toward love. How will you allow the spiritual transformation of your baptismal drink, which God is constantly working on in you, to change the way you honor the dignity of at least one other person today and tomorrow?