

## *From the Rector's Study ~*

As a season in the cycle of the Church's annual life, Pentecost reminds Christians that we are living in a distinct era. Different from the age in which people lived in hope and anticipation of a promised, but not yet arrived, Messiah; different from the short period of time when Jesus lived among the people of Galilee and Judea; ours is the era of post-resurrection and post ascension. To understand this era as well as possible in body, mind, and spirit is to give this era fuller meaning for us. To understand this era as fully as possible helps us to appreciate more fully both the blessing and the responsibility of living in it.

Some refer to Pentecost as the birth of the Church. On Pentecost Sunday, someone wished me 'Happy Birthday' as a reminder of this fact. The Spirit is God become present to humanity more intimately than any could ask or imagine. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost certainly makes this 'the age of the Holy Spirit.' "The Spirit of Jesus indwells Christian consciousness. It animates the community of faith and leads to a deeper appreciation of the life and message of Jesus. That is clear." So observes author and theologian Anthony H. Kelly in his book *The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian Life and Thought*. And while this is a fine concept, I find that I still have reservations that we Christians tend to move rather more quickly than we ought past Jesus' resurrection. Author Kelly has his own reservations, noting that "the event of the resurrection as something happening *to him* [i.e. to Jesus] can be bypassed, a more or less mythic expression of the origin of a new spiritual awareness."

His suggestion is that because that resurrection is a troublesome matter for Christians to address, or to present in an intellectually credible way, we tend to avoid it in talking about it very much in Christian life, in favor of referring to it almost exclusively as a source of inspiration, but not dwelling on it after that. So, although we are, yes, in the season of the Spirit liturgically, and yes we live in the post-resurrection post-ascension era, I would still suggest that we do well to retain a poignant sense of the resurrection. And by this, I mean that hope that we can appreciate the resurrection as a concept and a metaphor that inspires; but also hope that we can ponder and build spiritually on the resurrection as an event that occurred in the life of Jesus, the Son of God.

Kelly describes Jesus' resurrection, interestingly I think, as something that we want to avoid taking for granted, but as something that we want to recognize as granted to us by God. God grants us Jesus' resurrection; God grants us to know of it and to participate in it, if we but choose to do so. In Kelly's view, and my own, the determinative question for the Christian

is not how to explain the resurrection; but how to explain the life that is lived according to it as a given.

This is not to say that we should fear pursuing an intellectual understanding of it. It is simply to recommend that we not limit our engagement of Jesus' resurrection to a few weeks or a single day each year. Instead, we do well to keep Jesus' resurrection prominent in heart and mind in order to allow it to have full effect upon what we do and who we are as God's people.

Kelly puts it this way: "...the transformation of the flesh of the Crucified means for him [i.e. for Jesus] a full-bodied existence at once embracing and transforming our incarnate existence: his body and flesh, in ways that transcend mortal thinking, is the communicative field in which he dwells in his members, and they in him, nourished by his body and blood and breathing his Spirit. In consequence, the phenomenon of the resurrection communicates the experience of being 'faced' by Christ throughout all time and space, not only as the form, source, and anticipation of eternal life, but as summoning the believer to see him and to respond to him as the Other in the face of all others." I recognize that Kelly writes even longer sentences than I do (!), but I appreciate his insights.

Because of Christ's incarnation, and because it was this incarnate Christ Jesus that was raised by the Spirit of God, we not only do live now in the age of the Spirit of God, but the effect of this is that we live as the similarly incarnate presence of Christ Jesus in this place and at this time. There is something materially real and impactful about recognizing this. Somehow this brings to the fore a sense of the great blessing and the great responsibility that we bear with Jesus. Whereas the Spirit can be relegated to a sentiment or an attitude, and thus 'domesticated,' the incarnate presence of Jesus Christ is less subject to being conceptually tamed.

Yes, the season of Pentecost is the era of the Spirit of God. But by remembering effect of the Spirit, of the movement of the Spirit upon us, within us, and through us, we find that the era of Pentecost is very much an era of the wider incarnation of Jesus Christ, quite literally through you and me. So, be attentive and find how you meet Christ very materially and really in persons and places that you may least expect. And go ahead and indulge your expectations and meet Christ also where you most anticipate finding Christ. And please dare also to meet Christ within yourself. I know that I find Christ there within you all the time.

God's Peace. *Jim, +*