

Pentecost 2020

Jan Richardson, an artist, writer, and ordained minister in the United Methodist Church serves as director of The Wellspring Studio, LLC, and has travelled widely as a retreat leader and conference speaker. Below is her offering for Pentecost.

Acts 2.3-4

If we didn't know it before, we surely know it now, as the second chapter of Acts unfolds: this is no tame God who comes to us, no safe and predictable deity. This is the God whose loving sometimes takes the form of scorching.

Before he left, Jesus told his friends he would send them the Advocate, the Comforter. Now we see this Comforter coming as wind, as flame, reminding us that comfort is not always comfortable, for it makes itself known in community, where we find the most searing challenges—and the deepest blessings—we will ever know.

This Graces That Scorches Us, A Blessing for Pentecost Day

Here's one thing
you must understand
about this blessing:
it is not
for you alone.

It is stubborn
about this.
Do not even try
to lay hold of it
if you are by yourself,
thinking you can carry it
on your own.

To bear this blessing,
you must first take yourself
to a place where everyone
does not look like you
or think like you,
a place where they do not
believe precisely as you believe,
where their thoughts
and ideas and gestures
are not exact echoes
of your own.

Bring your sorrow.
Bring your grief.
Bring your fear.
Bring your weariness,
your pain,
your disgust at how broken
the world is,
how fractured,
how fragmented
by its fighting,
its wars,
its hungers,

its penchant for power,
its ceaseless repetition
of the history it refuses
to rise above.

I will not tell you
this blessing will fix all that.

But in the place
where you have gathered,
wait.
Watch.
Listen.
Lay aside your inability
to be surprised,
your resistance to what you
do not understand.
See then whether this blessing
turns to flame on your tongue,
sets you to speaking
what you cannot fathom

or opens your ear
to a language
beyond your imagining
that comes as a knowing
in your bones,
a clarity
in your heart
that tells you

this is the reason
we were made:
for this ache
that finally opens us,

for this struggle,
this grace
that scorches us
toward one another
and into
the blazing day.

If you still have the courage, you might like to pray this version of the Pentecost sequence penned by Susan Connolly rsj.

Pentecost Verses

Spirit of God, come weave your dreams
In marrow, joints and in between
And sew them in our hearts.

Come, father mother of the poor,
Our endless, overflowing store,
The source of all love's arts.

You are our comfort unsurpassed,
Contentment, as when home at last,
Refreshment when we thirst.

When we're burdened, you are rest,
Keen to give at our request
An energetic burst.

Share with us Christ's consciousness
In whatever wilderness,
Send us, aim us true.

When we're dull and unaware,
When we miss the mark, be there,
Guide our way anew.

In our souls' most hidden reach,
There you breathe and there you teach,
Dark but flaming night.

In the garb of everyday
There you weave your gentle way:
Jesus' mind and sight.

Bound by racing time and space
Human mind cannot keep pace;
In loving awe, we bow.

Absolute, you are beyond us
Yet, within, the fire that bonds us;
Silent, you surround.

Susan Connelly RSJ