Imagine a Modern-Day Pentecost



They were all gathered in one place together: Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Burundis, Kenyans, Sudanese, Americans, Vietnamese, Syrians and Samoans. Suddenly, there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire space in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and

began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. But each one understood the leader in his or her native language.

Each person was gifted with different spiritual gifts: mothers, fathers, children, border agents, volunteers, the elderly, the ill and the desperate. But to each the manifestation of the Spirit was given for some benefit. Each one was welcomed, his or her individual needs attended to, and their requests respectfully processed.

A fantasy? Yes, a modern Pentecost on our borders!

We may say that imagining such a scene is a fruitless indulgence. The news media present us with daily accounts of the chaos at our borders. Families are separated, individuals are summarily deported and volunteers are overwhelmed with the need. Meanwhile, public officials exacerbate the problem with their rhetoric. But our faith tells us that each one, refugee and government employee alike, is a child of God and joint heir with Christ.

What to do? Our Institute Justice Team and other organizations such as Catholic Charities and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious give us practical ways to assist our suffering brothers and sisters. We can volunteer at the border, we can contribute money and supplies, we can meet the travelers as they change buses in our cities and help them on their way. We can welcome them into our cities, if that is their destination. We can advocate just and compassionate public policies.

In addition, the 13th century hymn we sing on Pentecost, *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, invites us to open our own hearts to the incredible gifts of the Spirit:

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away.
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

Who among us is without wounds or stains of guilt? Who has never known a stubborn heart or let her footsteps go astray? In this holy season, let us open our hearts to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord—recognizing that the Spirit knows our every need. In this

great rush of the Spirit's giving, may it be poured out far and wide—on those at the border, on those in the halls of power and on ourselves.

Now the Pentecost scene imagined above is no longer a fantasy, but an exercise in prophetic imagination. "Come, Holy Spirit, come! Come. Father of the poor! Come, source of all our store! You, the soul's most welcome guest; sweet refreshment here below. O most blessed Light divine, shine without these hearts of yours, and our inmost being fill!"

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