



Pentecost - John 20: 19-23

‘Receive the Holy Spirit’

The ten disciples had just seen Jesus disappear. Crowded together in the upper room they sat in silence, staring at the emptiness where he had just been.

Earlier Jesus had suddenly appeared before them, coming in a dazzling light. He had spoken wonderful words. Then, just as he had come, he suddenly dissolved, taking his light with him.

In the dusky light of the room the flames from the oil lamps flickered, splashing an eerie yellow upon the circle of disciples. No-one could speak. They were still in rapture from his presence.

Recalling what Jesus had said to them, Peter’s lips began to move silently as he repeated the words of Jesus. Then he broke the silence: ‘...as the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ The others looked over at Peter, honoring his leadership and waiting for further explanation.

“Each of us must teach others what Jesus has taught us,” Peter said. “He has breathed his life into us! He has filled us with his promised holy spirit. Now we must begin to do his will.”

Thaddeus spoke up: “What did our Lord mean about sins and about us forgiving them?”

Peter answered: “He said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive sins, they are forgiven. If you don’t forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

They all fell into a silence, repeating Jesus’ words to themselves. As they spoke the words in their minds, Jesus’ power claimed them. They had just inherited the Church. Infused with the Spirit, they were eager to begin.

Peter cleared his throat and they all looked at him. He opened his hands, as if releasing a bird to fly to them. His gesture was a challenge for them to begin the work that Jesus had left for them.

Ready to begin, but not knowing in which direction, young Thaddeus stood up to ask: “What do we do now?”

And then everybody began to speak at once.



As Jesus filled the disciples with his Holy Spirit that Sunday night, he will come also to us, providing we have made room for him in our lives.

Like the disciples going to the upper room, we must go to a place where Jesus can appear to us. Such a place might be at our church, but it could just as well be the silence of our heart. Wherever it is, there we must wait in joyful hope for his coming.

As we wait, we must clear our minds to receive the Holy Spirit. Hearts that are full of other wants and desires are like busy schedules with no time left to receive visitors. We must make room in our hearts for the Holy Spirit.

Once filled with the Spirit, we, like Thaddeus, may be asking the life-changing question: “What do we do now?”