

Dignity New York
Pentecost 2018 Homily

“I Am Thirsty”, by John Falcone

Sprinkling / Renewal of Baptism: Taize, “Let All Who Are Thirsty Come”

1st Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

2nd Reading: Romans 8:22- 27

Gospel: John 7:37-39

Are you thirsty?

Because I am thirsty.

Most of us know St. Luke’s story of Pentecost:

Suddenly there was a noise,
 like a strong wind coming down out of heaven;
 and it filled the whole house where they were staying.

Tongues then appeared, as of fire,
 which parted
 and came to rest on each one of them.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit
 and began to speak in different languages,
 just as the Spirit enabled.

That’s the first reading for the Feast Day of Pentecost.

But tonight’s readings are from the *Vigil* of Pentecost:
 the night before readings,
 the “Not quite there yet; we’re still waiting” readings.

The Day readings are about fire and proclamation;
 about the birth of a new, Christian community.

The Vigil readings are about water, and thirst:
 dry bones;
 amniotic waters just breaking;
 living waters that quench deeper thirsts.

Are you thirsty?

Are you waiting for something?

Are you waiting for something new to be born?

I am waiting for a world to be born
where the politics of Pentecost frames our vision
and gives fire to our lives.

Luke describes Pentecost in political terms.
Pentecost is the anti-Tower of Babel,
where ancient political divisions are overcome.

“Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?

Then how does each of us hear them in our own native tongue?

We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,

Mesopotamians, Judeans and Cappadocians,

from Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Egypt, Libya, Crete, Arabia and Rome.”

It's important that Luke starts this list with
Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Mesopotamians.

Luke was a subject of the *Roman* Empire,
but these four nations had never been conquered by Rome.

The rest of his list consists of Roman provinces,
and of *Rome*, as the seat of the Empire;

but Media, Elam and Mesopotamia were parts of the *Parthian* Empire –
the bitter, arch-enemies of the Romans.

In Luke's Pentecost vision,
there will still be differences,
maybe even competition and conflict.

But enemies will understand each other;
 factions within our electorate and our families,
 even within our own Dignity community
 will *try* to connect, and *succeed*;
 borders will exist to be crossed.

The political implications are also clear in tonight's reading
 from the prophet Ezekiel.

The *nation* is dried up and hopeless.
 The *nation* has resigned itself to the grave.

To use a more contemporary idiom:
 the *nation* has become a country of the Walking Dead.

Half of us are busy eating each other;
 the rest of us just want it all to end.

So I am waiting. But I am hoping. I am thirsty.

Jesus was thirsty.

When he was young, he was thirsty for Mary's breast.

When he was older,
 he was thirsty for John's head on his bosom,
 and for the caress of Mary Magdalene's hand on his face.

On the road to Jerusalem, even his feet became thirsty,
 and a woman washed them with her tears.

And when he was finally lifted up from the earth –
 glorified,
 heartbreaking,
 lynched on a tree,
 among his last words were, "I am thirsty!"

I think Jesus *was* thirsty.

Thirsty for no more lynchings.

No more Emmet Tills, no more Matthew Sheppards, no more Trayvon Martins.

No more gay Chechen men hounded to death.

No more 15 year old girls gang raped in India and set on fire.

I think Jesus was thirsty for justice.

“The Spirit of our God is upon me:
because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;
to proclaim release to the captive;
to proclaim the year of our God’s jubilee.”

I think Jesus is thirsty for poor people and students to have their debts cancelled.
For every person to have meaningful employment,
affordable health care, and a roof over their head.

I think Jesus is thirsty for felons and ex-felons
to reconnect with their family and community life.
To work, vote, and receive government benefits:
that’s 6.1 million US citizens;
in some states that represents 1 in every 4 Black Americans.¹

I think Jesus is thirsty for the day when Central American families
can seek out asylum,
as easily as my portfolio manager
seeks out investment opportunities in the developing world.

I think that this vision is more than a fantasy:
because our current system is falling apart.

Even our most affluent citizens
can see that late stage capitalism is on its dying legs.
Every year we humans and our economies
consume what it takes ecospheres 18 months to replenish.

Ecologically, economically, politically, morally, the current system is bankrupt:
unsustainable.

Of necessity, a new world *is* being born.

And part of me, inside, *is* groaning for that new world to come.

Is part of you inside groaning too?

¹ <https://felonvoting.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000287>

Can we admit how thirsty we really are for a way of life that's sustainable,
and a world that actually makes sense?

In his telling of the true, final Pentecost,
St. John says that the endgame has already been written.
The question is,

Will we take up God's vision and invitation?

Will we come to the water and be saved?

John says,

A powerful beast will rise up with disgusting words on its forehead –
but its regime will go down to the pit.

The wealthy will weep over their ruin
when financial centers finally collapse.

The land will be charred, and the sea will be poisoned,
and death will rain down from the sky –

but neither strip miners
nor oil companies
nor military drones and Black-hawk helicopters will have the last word:
only God.

John says,

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, right here on this planet.

Because the old heaven and the old earth had worn themselves out.

And I saw a wholesome city – a brand new Jerusalem – coming down out of
heaven from God.

And I saw the water of life, bright as crystal,
flowing from the Lamb and from God.

And I saw the tree of life:
its fruits fed the nations,
and its leaves were like medicine for the poor.

And I heard the Spirit and the church.
They said, "Come!"

Come to God, all you who are thirsty.
Come receive freely the water of life.

And let everyone who hears them say, "Come!"

Come without money, come cross all the borders!
Come take up the hope, come grasp hold of the vision!
Come, let something new in us be born!

And I say: Amen!

Come to us, Jesus!