

PENTECOST 2006

Greetings in the Spirit of Christ to the Sisters, Brothers and Friends of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion!

In the opening pages of the Book of Genesis we encounter the great song of creation in which we are told that the Divine Spirit hovered over the primordial waters from which God, by means of the Word, called forth the whole of creation. Through the activity and power of the Holy Spirit, the universe was born in all its entirety, complexity, and potentiality.

In the story of the Garden of Eden we are told that God formed humanity from the dust of the earth, and, by the breath (ruah) of the Holy Spirit, humanity became a living being in the image of God. Somehow, however, humanity, along with the whole of creation, became alienated from God; we lost the Divine Spirit. We were made subject to the reign of death.

Nonetheless, God did not abandon us. By the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God was revealed to us through the words of the ancient Hebrew prophets. God's self-disclosure to humanity in the prophetic word was for the purpose of calling humanity back into relationship with the Divine, which is the life of the Spirit.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived within her womb the Savior of the world who would be called the Son of God. When Jesus was baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven and anointed Him to become our Messiah, the Christ, who, through His death and resurrection, would bring salvation to all of the world. Having been anointed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was able to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Divine power. Through the Spirit He healed the sick, expelled the demonic, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead. After dying on the cross and being buried in the tomb, we are told that it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was raised from the dead. Because of the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit is now made available to us. It began in this way:

Before ascending into Heaven, Jesus instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem to await "the promise of the Father"; that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit. With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the disciples received the same Divine power that Jesus had to continue the proclamation of the Gospel and the saving work that He had begun. With the arrival of Pentecost came the long-awaited day in which the Holy Spirit would be restored to humanity and ultimately to all creation. That same Spirit has been given to us

through the waters of baptism. That same Spirit is at work in all of our hearts and lives and is our guarantee of eternal life in God's kingdom yet to come.

This Pentecost, let us open our hearts so that our lives may be filled with the Holy Spirit and that we would become a people of the Spirit living in the same joy and power of Jesus and His first disciples.

For it is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we are able to fully realize the life of Christ in us, a life of faith, hope and love.

Let us celebrate and rejoice in gratitude for the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

In the bonds of Christ's love,

The Most Reverend Peter E. Hickman
ECC Presiding Bishop