

Let Us Keep the Teaching

What words would I have for CCSA at this time of Pentecost?

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit

and began to speak in different languages as

the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.

(Acts 2:4)

These familiar words from the text concerning the event of Pentecost stir us with excitement. Something is happening. It is new. It is life changing. It is expansive. It is unprecedented. There is Power here and the Power is for life. In some traditions, Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. I must admit that I have never seen it that way. I think that the birth of the Church took place during the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. I think that the event of Pentecost was the gift of the Spirit of God for the empowering of the new, little and frightened Church to undertake its mission in the world. The mission certainly meant the proclamation of the Gospel, and the ever widening circle of the sacraments. The mission meant new life, new hope, a reprieve for the many from the shadows of the world crisis in which they lived. And in the book of Acts, as well as elsewhere, we learn just how successful this mission became. In the power of the Spirit, the Church moved from Jerusalem to the heart of the Roman Empire, the city of Rome itself. At the end of the book of Acts the center of the Church is Rome, not Jerusalem. The whole known world has been inundated by the power of the Spirit through the followers of Jesus the Christ. What the Spirit does cannot be thwarted. What the Spirit seeks to accomplish, the Spirit does accomplish. There are no obstacles to the power of the Spirit acting on behalf of life and the promise of life. The Spirit, which is the agent of creation (Gen. 1:1-2), knows no boundaries. By this Spirit the new takes place.

I think it is worth considering that CCSA is an agent of the Holy Spirit. How could it be otherwise? There are so many forces arrayed in front of this agency. There are so many forces that would impede its forward movement. There are more and more of our sisters and brothers in need. There are less and less real county and city resources with which to meet the needs of our neighbors. In some circles, there is a great indifference to those in need. There is certainly very little understanding of why so many of our sisters and brothers are in need. It seems as though that while

the issues of poverty, of subsistence living, of less than subsistence living grow; so too there grows a stronger malaise regarding what is truly one of the most vital issues facing our society and the future of our country. In the face of these forces, and others you might think of, CCSA withstands the harsh storms and stress of a very difficult but much needed ministry. It is true that several years ago this agency almost ceased to exist. But, no. Today CCSA is perhaps the strongest and most efficient it has ever been. How to explain this if not by way of miracle? And how to explain the miracle if not by the power of the Holy Spirit? And please understand that I use this language very carefully, and literally. This, to me, is no cliché or easy way of talking. To speak thus about the Spirit of God is a very serious matter. And I

am being very serious. How to explain the strong and persistent ministry of this agency except by the work of the Holy Spirit?

I know, as you know—some of you better than I—that CCSA faces many difficult challenges in the months ahead. But my word is simply this: trust in the Power of the Spirit, the Power that is for life. Every person who works in whatever way for this agency is a minister of the Spirit for life. Against many odds, so many still take up the task of ministry that this agency presents them with. It is a miracle. And it is more than a miracle. It is a witness. It is an ever vibrant witness to the melody of the Spirit that out of the crisis would bring the new. Take heart. Keep hope alive. The Spirit is not yet finished, and neither is our response to be ministers on behalf of life.

Yours in Faith,

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President of CCSA