



The Episcopal Diocese of Long Island

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Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost

May 23, 2021

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Bishop of Long Island**

In the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A year ago on the Feast of Pentecost we were in the midst of the beginning of the pandemic and we were dealing with all the ambiguity and fear. On that Pentecost I preached these words which I will share with again today:

“Today, this celebration of Pentecost provides us the opportunity to be renewed by God’s Holy Spirit, not in wishful thinking, not in a delusion of returning to some mis-conceived normalcy, but in holy expectation of God acting in our time. To move the church into the moments of terror and fear so many of us are experiencing and transform this experience into a time of deep and abiding peace that God brings to us, breathes on us and creates in us, to move out beyond our walled-in reality to a transformed movement of sharing Jesus’ love and compassion with a hurting and confused world.

The Pentecost event as recorded in scripture did not change the world outside that locked room, it created the church to serve and help transform the world.

Out of our deep prayer, our liturgical and sacramental life, the church must—absolutely must—serve the world, challenge the world, and overcome the sin and selfish greed that infects the world as a means of further breathing the peace and wholeness that was the original intent of the creator and sealed for all humanity in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Today as we come to celebrate this Feast of Pentecost, we are in fact emerging from the confinement of fear and death brought on us by the pandemic. Vaccinations and safe protocols are allowing us to move out more freely.

As in the first Pentecost event, as the disciples were encouraged by the Holy Spirit to move out and proclaim the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection to a world that had not yet known the reality of Pentecost, you and I are called to move out—to live the promises of the baptismal covenant as a proclamation of new life. New life in Jesus Christ that we know as members of the church.

One of the ways we are blessed to engage this work is through our stewardship. Stewardship is the use of our time, our talent, and our treasurer to promote the life of Christ in the midst of the world.

Throughout the lockdown of the pandemic, members of our diocese have faithfully and diligently used their time and talent and treasure to assist people in need. Through the work of Episcopal Ministries of Long Island and its partnerships with so many ecumenical and interfaith colleagues, we have been able to demonstrate God's love and collectively care for the real needs of our neighbors in Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk, across the country and around the world.

Episcopal Ministries of Long Island does not merely raise money to fund ministry, it cultivates and energizes parish ministries to serve the local community. It provides the substance that reminds us that our calling as God's people in the church, is to be the church, get out of our buildings and care for, live with, and share in the lives of our neighbors—especially those who are most vulnerable in our midst.

As we come to share in this feast of Pentecost, we do so in the midst of the Annual Appeal of Episcopal Ministries. I ask you each in this celebration to consider well your stewardship of the ministry of the church—the real work of the church in our time. The people of God need your time, your talent, and your treasurer to be shared in the effort to build up the Body of Christ, to continue to share the Gospel reality with those around us, and most especially to provide the courage, wisdom, and strength of the Pentecost event, as we understand it through our baptism, to serve the needs of all God's people.

In this diocese, as the restrictions of the pandemic ease, it will certainly feel like a return to normalcy. But we know very well that all the events of this past year have changed us, transformed us in so many ways. That as we emerge we must, absolutely must, allow ourselves to be open and obedient to the movement of the Holy Spirit as we are guided to see the church and its work in new and sometimes ancient ways. We are no longer a part of the establishment, no longer the 1950s church, we are more like the disciples

emerging from the upper room to fearlessly proclaim the new life of Christ to a world that has lost its way.

I ask you my brothers and sisters in Christ to celebrate this Feast of Pentecost mindful of the missionary call to the church to be the church.

Allow yourselves to be set free from fear and apprehension of the reaction of the world around us. Let's plan to do bold and faithful things for the cause of Christ. Not to convert people, but rather to be converted. To remember what fear has done to us in the past and to move beyond it boldly as the early Christians, as our ancestors in faith.

Episcopal Ministries of Long Island is providing us with a way forward, an invitation to step out and move into the world in new and exciting ways. It is the tool in our diocese we use to bridge the needs of the world and community to the prayer of the church. Or maybe better stated: Episcopal Ministries is the means through which the deep longing of our prayers find outward and visible expression.

I ask you on this Feast of Pentecost to embrace this tool in our diocesan life, to walk out of fear, preoccupation and complacency, and, as the disciples on the first Pentecost, to walk boldly in the world we are called to serve.

Together we can be the church. Together we can call God's people to service. Together we can help and heal a sinful and broken world.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.