

When I was younger, which I like to think was not all that long ago, I used to like the story in the bible where Elijah went up the mountain to speak with God. It was in 1 Kings Chapter 19 verses 11-13, it goes like this.

Then the LORD said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD--but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake--but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire--but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

It helped me picture God the Father as a gentle, kind and caring figure. Not someone to be afraid of or who was unapproachable, yet someone who commanded respect. Jesus too had an image like that to me, someone who was forgiving, slow to anger, full of compassion. Both the Father and the Son seemed a little laid back and did not really force themselves on anyone. They presented themselves to us and it was through the gift of freewill that we accepted them.

I don't remember exactly when it was, it may have been just after I was ordained, a mere 8 years ago this coming Tuesday, that one of the teachers at the school ask me how she could describe the Holy Spirit to the 1st graders. I remember having to sit back and think myself. I used the analogy of the air around us. It is always there, we can't see it but we can see the effects of its presence and power. We can feel the quiet wind on our face and see the leaves move gently in the breeze. We can also see the power as in a raging storm or feel the biting cold of a winter wind. But no matter what, we need it for life giving breath.

I thought this was a good comparison for the children to understand but it is totally different to the actual way that I view the Spirit.

Even as I was writing this homily I felt the Spirit was playing with me. Thoughts were going through my head so swiftly that I could not type fast enough. I had to stop, step back and try to slow things down so I could understand. All of my homily helps were of no good to me because they didn't make sense. It was like the Spirit was saying, don't bother with them write what you are feeling. There he goes again, how can you write a feeling?

So I will give it my best shot. I use the word he because I can't think of any other way to describe this third person of the Trinity we call the Spirit. I see the Spirit not as words but as actions. He doesn't wait for you but he always comes back for you. He doesn't care if you understand but he gives you understanding. When he is around, it is total chaos that if you stop, backup and look again makes total sense.

Let me take you back to a night in late April in the year 2002. It was around 2 a.m. and I was working the night shift on a machine that was making facial tissues and putting them in a cube shaped box. It was a month before my ordination and I was having second, third and fourth thoughts on if I should really be a deacon.

What did God want with me anyway? How could someone like me make any difference in anyone else's life? I'm not smart, I don't have a college education, heck if it wasn't for spell check or my daughters correcting my grammar on my papers I probably wouldn't have made it through the classes. Even my homiletic teacher told me I needed a lot of work in coming up with maybe, once in a while, having a homily that people could relate to.

Then it happened, I was literally thrown back into my chair and could not even try to understand what happened. I had to sit down, rewind the thoughts that were racing through my head, and play them back slowly so I could comprehend what just happened. The words in my

head were telling me. “If you don’t think that God is calling you to do this, why do you think the devil is working so hard to talk you out of it?”

And you know that up to that time, he was doing a darn good job. It was at that point that I decided to be ordained.

I guess it was from that time on that I thought of the Spirit in a different way. When Jesus sent the Spirit to the world he sent him to the whole world. The Spirit can not be held in any type of container, there is no building or room that can hold him. Mountains or seas can not stop him, rivers or valleys can not make him take an alternate route around them. Governments cannot prevent him from entering their countries, he needs no passport.

He does not sneak into our lives; he comes boldly and suddenly like a strong driving wind. He mixes things up and tosses things around and then he settles upon us and imparts his gifts on us. We receive them in the water of our Baptism and they are made stronger at our anointing with oil at our Confirmation. And they are different for each one of us, different talents, different services, and different works, given to us not as we see fit but as he sees the need to do his work. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

At that first Pentecost, at the birth of the church as we know it today, the Spirit transformed the disciples; they in turn began to transform the people through the words the Spirit prompted them to proclaim. That transformation continues today as the Spirit carries on his work in the world around us to renew the face of the earth. So you see, my wanting to be a deacon has nothing to do with the Spirit, but the Spirit has everything to do with me being a deacon.

We have so much in common with the disciples as we gather in this room today, and

although we may not leave here speaking in different languages we still must leave here and proclaim the good news to the world. And how, you may ask, will we do that? Ah that is the great adventure that lies ahead. For it is for each of us to discover how the Spirit will work through us for the benefit of others.