

Spark of Advocate, Blaze of Peace

6/8/2025

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When I was in elementary school, I was—as some might politely say—full of energy. Mischievous would be a more accurate word. My family had just moved to a new part of the city for my father’s ministry, and with the move came a new school, new friends, and new adventures. My new friends were as mischievous as I was, and we discovered all sorts of places to explore. One of our favorite hangouts was the basement of a condominium next to the school. It was dark, secret, and felt like our own little kingdom.

One day, as we were playing down there, one of my friends found an old, abandoned rice cooker. For some reason, he thought it would be a good idea to light a piece of paper inside it. What started as a tiny flame quickly grew. The paper caught, then the rice cooker began to burn. Panic set in. We tried to put it out, but the fire spread too fast. Thankfully, the building’s security guard helped put it out before anything worse happened. But let me tell you—I got to meet the principal in a very memorable way that day, and my parents were none too pleased either.

The lesson? Even the smallest spark can lead to a fire that burns wildly out of control. But, fire isn’t always destructive. Fire, in the right context, purifies. Fire warms. Fire transforms. And today, on Pentecost Sunday, we talk about the holy fire—the flame of the Holy Spirit that began as a spark in the hearts of Jesus’ disciples and became a blaze that set the world aflame with God’s peace and presence.

Psalm 104 is a beautiful hymn to the Creator, celebrating the intricate design and vibrant life of the universe. “*O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.*” The psalmist sees the breath of God, not just as a poetic metaphor, but as a literal force that brings forth life. “*When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground*” (v. 30).

Here, we encounter the Spirit—the Advocate—not first in tongues of fire but in the breath that stirs the world to life. The same Spirit that hovered over the waters in Genesis now enlivens every corner of creation.

This divine spark that animates creation is not distant or abstract. It is personal. It is present. It is the breath in our lungs, the warmth in our community, and the quiet stirring in our spirits when we are called to love, to forgive, to stand for justice. This same Spirit is the One whom Jesus promised in John 14—the Advocate who abides with us and in us.

In the Gospel reading, the disciples are anxious. Jesus is preparing them for his departure, but he doesn’t leave them alone. He says, “*I will ask the Father, and the Advocate will be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth... You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*”

Jesus does not promise ease or comfort. He promises presence. He promises power. The Spirit of truth doesn’t come to entertain us or make us feel spiritual for an hour on Sunday. The Spirit comes to dwell. To teach. To remind. To advocate.

Just as that little spark in the rice cooker turned into something far greater, the Spirit, once kindled in us, can become a holy blaze—burning away fear, lighting up justice, and warming our world with peace. But it all starts with the spark: the divine gift, offered to each of us, not for hoarding but for sharing.

Pentecost is often associated with loudness—rushing wind, fiery tongues, people speaking in many languages. But let’s remember where it started: with fear. The disciples were huddled in a room, uncertain and overwhelmed. And into that moment, the Spirit came—not just to comfort, but to commission.

The Advocate turned their fear into fire. The Spirit ignited their hearts, sharpened their speech, and empowered them to go out into a world that did not always welcome their message. But they went, anyway. Because that’s what the Spirit does.

God’s Spirit does not come to domesticate our lives but to disrupt them—with peace, with truth, with justice. And this Spirit doesn’t just work in individuals—it creates community. The early church wasn’t born out of one person’s fire but from a community ignited together.

Peace is not just the absence of conflict. The peace that Jesus offers—“*My peace I give to you*”—is not like the world gives. It is wholeness. Shalom. A deep, abiding harmony between creation, Creator, and community.

This peace is not passive. It is active. It moves us to reconcile, to heal, to reach out. It is a peace that protests injustice, feeds the hungry, and welcomes the stranger. It is the peace that defies empire and builds the kingdom.

In our fractured world, this peace is desperately needed. And we have the spark—every one of us. But imagine how much greater the blaze could be if we joined our sparks together.

Recently, the Conference introduced a new structure—a hub connecting our church with others in our region. Some may see this as just an administrative shift, but I believe it is more than that. It is an invitation from the Spirit.

It is no coincidence that on this Pentecost, we reflect on the power of many voices, many hearts, many communities coming together in unity through the Spirit. Just like the disciples spoke in different languages but proclaimed the same good news, we too are called to collaborate across our churches, our traditions, our locations.

The spark of the Advocate is not given for personal inspiration alone. It is given so that, when combined with the sparks in others, a holy fire might spread—a blaze of peace, of justice, of mission in the world.

When we cooperate with our hub churches—when we pray together, serve together, dream together—we allow the flame of the Spirit to shine brighter than any of us could alone. Imagine what we could build: shared mission projects, regional worship nights, combined children’s ministries, joint care for our communities. Imagine what peace we might extend into a world that knows too much division and not enough divine fire.

Friends, the spark is already in you. The Advocate is already here. You do not have to manufacture the Spirit; you only need to receive, to tend the fire, to share the flame.

Let us not underestimate the spark within us. Yes, even a small spark can cause great harm, as I once learned in that condominium basement. But in God’s hands, a holy spark can also bring healing, clarity, courage, and life.

The Spirit does not only descend with fire from above. The Spirit also rises like warmth from within. So let the spark of the Advocate burn in you. Let the blaze of peace shine through your life. And let us, together with our neighboring churches, allow the flame of Pentecost to light a path of love, justice, and reconciliation in our world. Come, Holy Spirit. Spark in us the fire of your love. And we shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.