

The Wild and Crazy Holy Spirit – May 15, 2016  
By Wayne J. Schneider – Miserere Nobis (Have mercy upon us)

## The Wild and Crazy Holy Spirit Acts 2:1-15

What comes to your mind when you hear the words, "Holy Spirit?" It appears to me that we have little difficulty picturing God the Father thundering from Mt. Sinai; or God the Son called, as Thomas Howard does, "Christ the Tiger." But when we approach the Holy Spirit, I think the first thing that comes to mind is a gentle dove.

Now, I know the Gospels of St. Matthew, Mark and John present the Holy Spirit as a dove, but that is not the ONLY attribute. It was not a dove that started the church on what we call Pentecost Sunday. It looked more like a screaming eagle with its talons out! The beginning of the church is not a charming story but a dangerous one. The Celtic believers named the Holy Spirit "The Wild Goose." The name may sound sacrilegious, but it speaks of the Holy Spirit as unpredictable as a 'Wild Goose Chase.' You just cannot contain or control the Holy Spirit.

Picture a small group of secluded believers, all together in one place. Perhaps a bit paranoid and, if they knew what was going to happen, it would have freaked them out big time. They were in danger not from outsiders but from God the party-crasher, who was about to bring in those they were trying to keep out.

This was when all holy broke out: note the pyrotechnics: gale force winds, fire, languages, and all the crazy stuff that occurred on that Pentecost Sunday in Palestine in the first century; that looks bye-the-bye, nothing like the church universal today. Then there were no board meetings, no Vacation Bible Schools, no bake sales. The only thing that is the same are the people; we haven't changed at all.

We still encounter loneliness, fear, and isolation in the Body of Christ, and we call this sectarianism. For example, those who spoke in tongues, well, they were the Pentecostals. And all those from different nations that showed up must have been the first United Church of Christ, bragging about their multiculturalism. And those who saw those fantastical God-acts, and tried to understand it all by asking, "What does it all mean?" were, of course, the first Lutherans. And the people who shouted "Those people are drunk!" must have been the evangelicals, zeroed in on the morality of others. Nothing changed there. Finally, there were those who said, "O my goodness, they cannot be drunk, it is only 9 am." They must be the Methodists!

So, not much has changed with people. As Pogo famously said: "We have met the enemy, and he is us!" Among us are the naïve, the emotional, the judgmental, and those like me who must categorize and label everyone. Really. From the beginning, we are broken, baffled, embarrassed and embarrassing. In a word, we are the people God sends God's Holy Spirit to.

The reality is God has not changed either. He is still the party-crasher, still inviting the people we are trying to avoid. God continues to say 'yes' to all of our polite 'no-thank-you's.' This is what makes the whole thing so very dangerous. It is why the eagle with its razor-sharp talons is a more fitting image for the Holy Spirit, than a soft-focused Hallmark dove on a blue background.

It's true, when speaking of the Holy Spirit we must use metaphors like a dove, the wind, and a comforter. What we need to remember is that God's Spirit is not a metaphor, and she will mess with you. Metaphors can never do that. The comfort that the Holy Spirit brings is not warm puppies or chocolate cookies, but the reassurance of the truth. If you have ever experienced truth you know that it is not exactly relaxing.

We are the people God loves enough to send that crazy bird with her claws, to come and grab our hearts of stone and transplant them with God's own. The thing about the Holy Spirit is that she feels like the truth will squash us. And the

truth does trounce us, but the moment it does it recreates in us something real. Maybe for the first time.

The mysterious and revolutionary and dangerous thing the Holy Spirit does, has always been to create the Body of Church, to make us into the Church. Often regardless of, sometimes push-pulling us, but always for us. It is only the Holy Spirit who can move us from 'they' to 'we.'" Alleluia. Amen.