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St. James', Mt. Airy  
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Pentecost  
Acts 2:1-21  
Psalm 104:25-35, 37  
Romans 8:22-27  
John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

**Gracious God, take our minds and think through them;  
take our hands and work through them;  
take our hearts and set them on fire.  
Amen.**

Happy Pentecost!

Theologian and scientist Teilhard de Chardin wrote that the harnessing of fire is what made human civilization possible.

He went on to say that someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of **love**, and then for a second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered fire.

The Day of Pentecost shows us a glimpse of the power of that **love, in action**.

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We are fifty days out from Easter Day. The resurrection is the eternal event that demonstrates God's **love** for all time – a power that is stronger than all other powers of the world, stronger even than death.

And so, on Pentecost we celebrate that from death, new life comes, and on that first Pentecost, it was new life in the birth of the church – the day the Holy Spirit arrived to call forth those would follow the way of Jesus into **action**: into **loving** the world.

*Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rest on each of them.  
All of them were will filled with the Holy Spirit.*

It is no mistake the Holy Spirit appeared as flame.

Fire is an image linked to the divine over and over in scripture, from the bush that burned but was not consumed in front of Moses, to the pillar of fire that led the Israelites during the Exodus, to the refiner's fire, and beyond – fire and flame are powerful signs of God's presence.

But none are so powerful as the flame of **God's love** bestowed at Pentecost.

Because that flame-filled **love** wasn't just something to look at – it was, and is, a **VERB** – a way of living and being. Those gathered in Jerusalem all those centuries ago, and saints ever since, have showed us **how** we are to live this love.

The Order of the Holy Cross is an Anglican Benedictine monastic community that was founded in New York in 1884 by Episcopal priest James Huntington.

Part of the Rule of the Order of the Holy Cross expresses simply and clearly the **Pentecost call to love in action.**

It simply states: **Love must act, as light must shine, and fire must burn.**

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What if this was our rule too?

Just as the Holy Spirit sets our hearts on fire, and that fire must burn – light must shine, and so we are to shine as beacons of God’s love in a world too often cast in shadow – through it all, acting as agents of **God’s love in action**.

This begs the question, what exactly is this love, and how are we to live it?

Yesterday at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, our Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Michael Curry raised the roof and spoke passionately about the redemptive power of love.

He cautioned away from over sentimentalizing love, and invited us instead into a robust understanding of loving like Jesus – a love that reaches out to the margins, so that no one is excluded; a love that overturns not just tables, but the status quo of earthly power; a love that lays down one’s life for one’s friends.

This is the Great Commandment: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind... And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*

When we don’t just recite that – but **actually live it**, the world will be transformed.

As Presiding Bishop Curry preached, harkening to the quote from de Chardin about harnessing God’s love, “When we discover the redemptive power of love, we will make of this old world a new world.”

This is what we are baptizing Jack and Vivienne into today. And by renewing our own baptismal vows we remind ourselves again of **how** we are to **act in love**. Because, if I’ve said it once, I’ve said it a thousand times – the Baptismal Covenant is our map.

It lays out for us all the Holy Spirit calls us into as followers of God – outlining our faith in the words of the Apostles Creed, and giving us a 5 point plan for **living our faith in loving action** (our very own how-to guide).

When we don't just recite it – but **actually live it**, the world will be transformed.

But transformation doesn't come easy – and it usually comes at a cost. Like a diet, or a plan to get in shape, or a decision to mend a broken relationship – it's only as good as our will and dedication to following through and actually changing.

So if we only pay lip service to loving our neighbor, and respecting the dignity of every human being, but aren't willing to work to change the systems that dehumanize others, or sacrifice our comfort to spread compassion and justice, then the old world will continue on.

My hope this Pentecost is that the Spirit falls fresh on all of us, stoking the fire in our hearts, that we may live our faith out loud – making visible and tangible the love of God we are charged with sharing....remembering that:

**Love must act, as light must shine, and fire must burn.**

~ AMEN ~