

Dear Friends:

The perfect marriage: Christ and His Church. That's how St. Paul refers to the love Jesus Christ has for his church, and the love the church has for Christ.

He considers that love to be so deep as to be comparable to the love husbands and wives are called to have for each other. (See Ephesians 5:32)

For this reason, following the Bible's example, Christians tend to speak of Christ and the church in one breath. We prefer to speak of them together, rather than separately. The Day of Pentecost, and the Season of Pentecost, which are soon upon us (May 11), are a perfect example of this, and a great opportunity to be reminded of it. The Book of Acts, with its description of the first Pentecost, and with all the exciting early church events which followed, is a great place to see this in action.

It starts with Acts 2, telling the story of the first Pentecost. Like so many other chapters in the Bible, it relates one of God's mighty acts, as thrilling as the six days of creation or the parting of the Red Sea . God's Holy Spirit comes among the people, with the sound of a rushing wind and the sight of "tongues of fire". This is Almighty God, present among his people!

But how very "churchly" the whole event is as well. St. Peter preaches to the congregation, quoting from the Scriptures and showing how they speak a message from God, not just in the past, but in the present. And there is confession of sin and promise of forgiveness; there are baptisms - three thousand of them! - and there are shared meals and fellowship and joy and welcoming of one another.

It all sounds so much like the ongoing experience we are given at First Lutheran Church . How blessed we are, that Acts 2 describes not only the early church, but our beloved congregation as well! Christ is present by the power of the Holy Spirit, doing the mighty acts of God among us. And we are given to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, "with glad and generous hearts praising God and having the goodwill of all the people - and day by day, the Lord adding to our number." (Acts 2:46-47)

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Carl L.M. Rasmussen