

On this wonderful feast of Pentecost, I offer you the following reflection on the Holy Spirit, written by the American Theologian, Rachel Held Evans.

“The Spirit is like breath, as close as the lungs, the chest, the lips, the fogged canvas where little fingers draw hearts, the tide that rises and falls twenty-three thousand times a day in a rhythm so intimate we forget to notice until it enervates or until a supine yogi says pay attention and its fragile power awes again. Inhale. Exhale. Expand. Release. In the beginning, God breathed. And the dust breathed back enough oxygen, water, and carbon dioxide to make an atmosphere, to make humanity.

The Spirit is like fire, deceptively polite in its dance atop the wax and wick of our church candles, but wild and mercurial as a storm when unleashed. Fire holds no single shape, no single form. It can roar through a forest or fulminate in a cannon. It can glow in hot coals or flit about in embers. But it cannot be held. Fire consumes. It creates in its destroying and destroys in its creating.

The Spirit is like a seal, an emblem bearing the family crest, a promise of belonging, protection, favour. Like a signet ring to soft wax, the Spirit impresses the supple heart with the power and prestige of God, and no one—not kings, not presidents, not the wealthy, nor the magisterium—can take that identity away. It’s as invisible as your breath but as certain as your skin, so pay attention; don’t forget who you are.

The Spirit is like wind, earth’s oldest sojourner, which in one place readies a sail, in another whittles a rock, in another commands the trees to bow, in another gently lifts a bridal veil. Wind knows no perimeter. The wildest of all wild things, it travels to every corner of a cornerless world and amplifies the atmosphere. It smells like honeysuckle, curry, smoke, sea. It feels like a kiss, a breath, a burn, a sting. It can whisper or whistle or roar, bend and break and inflate. It can be harnessed, but never stopped or contained; its effects observed while its essence remains unseen.

The Spirit is like a bird, fragile alloy of heaven and earth, where wind and feather and flight meets breath and blood and bones. The rabbis imagined her as a pigeon, the Celts a wild goose. Like a dove, she glided over the primordial waters, hovered above Mary’s womb, and descended onto Jesus’ dripping wet head. She protected Israel like an eagle, and like a hen, brooded over her chicks. “

The Spirit is like a womb, from which the living are born again. We emerge from the water, eyes unadjusted to the light—into a reanimated and freshly charged world. There are so many new things to see, so many gifts to give and receive, so many miracles to baffle and amaze, if only we pay attention, if only we let the Spirit surprise and God catch our breath.”

May Boniface, Columba, and all the Saints walk with you this week...

*Sam*