

Holy Spirit Holes

Pastor Hubert - May 15, 1016 - Pentecost

If you've ever been to Europe, chances are you visited some of those magnificent cathedrals there — Notre Dame of Paris, Canterbury Cathedral, Cathedral of Florence, St. Peter's Cathedral... they are many centuries old, but their majestic towers still blow us away and make us feel humble and aware of God's presence.

And that's just on the outside. Going inside, you immediately notice the heavenly scenes that are painted on the great domed and vaulted ceilings; scenes of angels and saints, God and Christ, biblical characters. These works of art served not only to inspire the worshippers — they were also often cleverly used to hide trap doors in the cathedral ceiling to the very tops of their roofs. And this is why:



During the Pentecost worship service, some hapless servants would be drafted to scramble up on the rooftop. They would be listening in to the service below, and the appropriate moment during worship, they would release *live doves* through these holes. From out of the painted skies and clouds on the cathedral ceiling, these symbols of a vitally present Holy Spirit would swoop and dive down on the people below. At the same moment, the choirboys would run around

with streamers making whooshing and drumming sounds, like a holy windstorm.

But it didn't end there: as the doves were flying and the winds were rushing, the ceiling holes would open up once more — as bushels upon bushels of rose petals were showered down. And red, flickering bits of flowers like tongues of flame would gently fall upon the awe-struck congregation. Wow...! Who needs high-tech laser shows and holographic projections if you have *this*?

These special openings to the sky in medieval churches had a name; they were called "Holy Spirit holes."

Did you get that? "Holy Spirit holes." I didn't make that up! And it made me think... We need these Holy Spirit holes. *Our* churches need these skyward openings to experience the wind rush of God...

"Holy Spirit holes" would be good reminders that every now and then, every congregation needs to be awe-struck and wowed by God's unpredictable Spirit. They would be good reminders that God's Spirit can never be domesticated, not even by the hardest working congregation. They would be good reminders of how powerful we can be if we open ourselves up to that wild, powerful Spirit.

So where are the “Holy Spirit holes” in *our* church, the places or the opportunities where the Holy Spirit can still get in? And another question... are we ready for it?

On that first day of Pentecost, 2000 years ago, I doubt that’s how the disciples of Jesus had planned their day. (6:30 am, get up. 7 am, morning prayers. 8 am, breakfast. 9 am — Pentecost...?). Of course not; God had other plans. Suddenly their schedule was out the window as God made a very public spectacle of them; and a crowd gathered, wanting to know what was happening. Can’t you just hear the disciples? “So what do we do now?” “I dunno; we’ve never done *this* before!”

I firmly believe that God wants congregations to be more than secret "Jesus Commemoration societies", so to speak. In our creed one of the first things we declare is that we believe in "God who has created and IS creating". Pentecost wasn't a one-time event. God created and is *still* creating new communities, even among older churches.

And as long as those churches have some form of "Holy Spirit hole" in their lives, they will be empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit. And they can't help but become inviting, inclusive, worshiping and witnessing communities of faith. They will make a difference not just in their own lives, but in the lives of the people outside their doors. People who notice something special is happening there and who want to be part of it, whatever it is.

It reminds me of the story of the church whose steeple caught on fire. As the pastor was standing in the churchyard watching the fire department put it out, he noticed a non—church member neighbor standing beside him. “Why, Rick, I don’t think I’ve ever seen you at church before.” And Rick replied, “Well, I don’t think I’ve ever seen this church on fire before.”

Where are the “Holy Spirit holes” in our lives, openings where the Holy Spirit can get in? How can we recapture that feeling of being "on fire" again? Is it here in worship? Is it a special place or a special event where we gather with God in prayer? Who might God be wanting us to open our hearts to? What new things might God be wanting us to see? What new direction might God be wanting us to go in? These are not theoretical questions, these are the fundamental question we have to ask ourselves all the time. So pray about it, and be open to what the Spirit tells us.

You've probably never heard of Father Mychal Judge. He was a Franciscan priest and Chaplain to the Fire Department of New York. He was also the first member of that Fire Department to die in the attack of 9/11. Father Mychal was much loved and respected by all the men and women he worked with. It is said that every day, he would start by saying this prayer:



*Lord, take me where you want me to go.
Let me meet whom you want me to meet.
Tell me what you want me to say,
and keep me out of your way.*

A simple, powerful prayer. And if you think about it, a Pentecostal prayer. It's a prayer that helps to open up a "Holy Spirit hole" and to be open to whatever the Spirit has in store — for our church, and for every one of us here. So why don't we pray this together; the words are on the screen:

*Lord, take me where you want me to go.
Let me meet whom you want me to meet.
Tell me what you want me to say,
and keep me out of your way.*

Amen.