

They couldn't have thought it was for them when that sound from heaven came like the rush of a violent wind and filled the entire house. When divided tongues as of fire, little jets of a flame, appeared, they did not rest on them.

No, the Spirit's arrival on Pentecost didn't seem to be aimed at the devout Jews gathered together from every nation. Rather, Pentecost seemed aimed only at twelve special people: the twelve earliest followers of Jesus.

That is, until everyone heard their native language, until those gathered heard about God's deeds of power, in their mother tongue. The wind blowing, the fire alighting—it seemed at first for the twelve. But this—these words in their own languages—this was certainly aimed at them.

The Parthians heard Partian-ish. The Medes heard Mede-ish. The Elamites heard Elamite-ian. Now it was clear: the arrival of that Holy Wind, the emergence of this Creative Fire, the pouring out of God's Spirit, was indeed aimed at them.

We may imagine Pentecost and, more globally, the bestowal of God's Spirit, and assume it belongs to SOME people and not others. We see the tongues of fire swoop down and rest upon other people, special people, but not us. We imagine the Spirit comes and rests on certain people: those who are smart enough, or faithful enough, or fervent enough; people who speak the right language, whose skin is the right color, and who know the right people.

But the focus of Pentecost was never aimed only at the twelve. Instead, God had every one of those gathered, the entire house, in mind that day. The focus of Pentecost—the arrival of the Holy Spirit—is aimed at us. All of us.

Because Pentecost is our shared origin story. It's the Big Bang of the church, the initial creative event that sets Christ's church into motion. The Holy Spirit comes and not only empowers the disciples, but also fills all who believe, enabling everyone to witness and to hear of Christ's resurrection.

And the Holy Spirit keeps at it. The Holy Spirit keeps incorporating people into the body of Christ, guiding and helping and dwelling within God's people as they seek to live God's will. The Holy Spirit proves to be an on-going gift, not bestowing talents like speaking in tongues or doing miracles, but, as Luther's Small Catechism says, "calling, gathering, enlightening, and sanctifying the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeping it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

Yes, the focus of Pentecost is aimed at us. Not only as us the Church but also at each of us individually. Pentecost is aimed at you and me and the person next to you and me today. Because in baptism, each person relives and recapitulates the reception of the Holy Spirit when the pastor lays on hands and prays for the gift of the Holy Spirit in the baptized person's life. And Pentecost, as we celebrate it every year, is a day of reaffirming our baptism and discipleship, a day to recognize that the gift of the Holy Spirit has worked and is working in our individual lives.

Yes, the focus of Pentecost is aimed at us. And today, the focus of this Pentecost is aimed especially at Alex. Alex, who today reaffirms his discipleship and recognizes and re-receives the Spirit's presence in his own life through the Church's Rite of Confirmation.

Today, the Holy Spirit is aimed at you, Alex, as it comes to incorporate you into the body of Christ, to guide and help and dwell within you—just as it does for the church and every baptized person—as you seek to live God's will. And the Holy Spirit will empower and enable and equip you—just as it did for those first disciples and just as it does for all of us.

Because while today we celebrate the Spirit's presence in Alex's life, the Spirit is present not *just* in Alex's life, but in all of ours and in the life of the church.

Because the Holy Spirit never aims for only a few. The Spirit aims for the apostles and the assembly, at the individual as well as the community, at Alex as well as us. Today's laying-on-of-hands and prayer for one young man serves as our visual reminder that the Spirit does and will call, gather, enlighten, sanctify, and keep every one of us with Jesus Christ, just as it calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps all of Christ's church, and every believer, in our one true faith.

The crowd on the first Pentecost didn't think it was aimed at them. But it was. Perhaps you haven't thought that Pentecost is aimed at you, but it is. The focus of Pentecost, the arrival of the Holy Spirit, is intended for us: for those gathered, for the church universal, for the baptized, for Alex, who today shares and proclaims his faith in Jesus Christ in his native tongue and in whom God, once again, stirs up the power of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.