

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' (Acts 2:1-21)

The world is riven with division, polarities and binaries. We celebrate "diversity" but we often yearn for "unity" where people think and act in the same way. There is less social cohesion to keep us all together - in and between cultural groups and societies. And some argue that this loss of social cohesion means people come to expect less, and therefore act less to hold society together. When the Holy Spirit descends on the followers of Jesus at Pentecost, people from at least 15 different places across the Mediterranean heard the message from the apostles, each in their own native language (Acts 2:8). We bring our diversity into our unity as members of the Body of Christ. As Paul notes, a body cannot be just an eye or an ear, but each serves the one, integrated, functioning, and living body. And the "glue" that makes that body one is the Spirit. The Body of Christ is animated by God's Holy Spirit. It is truly wonderful to celebrate the diversity among our DIAKONIA Member Associations in language, food, cultural practices, and even the diversity of our theological and ecclesial traditions. Together, we are one, animated by God's Holy Spirit in which we find our unity.

Prayer

God, who comes to us as the Spirit,
Who breathes the fire of passion into us,
Who inspires us to compassion and courage,
You stir up in us the love made known in Christ.
You gift us with a message worth proclaiming,
Not just as empty words, but in actions and deeds.
You change the game. You transform us and our living.
You work in us subtly from the inside out.
You bring to us peace in the midst of the struggles and chaos of life.
Touch us now in ways we least expect. Surprise us with your reality,
And ignite our sense of passion and purpose,
That we might grasp the gifts you offer in us,
Take them and serve those who need of them in the world.
Bring us into your communion of the common good. Amen.

(Source: Jon Humphries, Prayers that Unite)

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