

## The Unbroken Chain of God's Presence Pentecost Sunday

"Loneliness," as Karen Carpenter used to sing so sadly, "it's such a sad affair." It's one of the plagues of modern Western society. It affected the disciples when they said farewell to Jesus at his Ascension.

Dr. James Lynch, a former medical researcher at John Hopkins, contends in his book, *The Broken Heart*, that loneliness is the number one physical killer today. It can literally break your heart.

"Using actuarial tables from ten years research, Dr. Lynch says that those who live alone—single, widowed, divorced—have premature death rates from two to ten times higher than individuals who live with others. Living alone, he says, does not necessarily produce loneliness, but the two are often related. Among divorced people, suicide is five times higher, fatal car accidents four times higher.

People who live alone visit physicians more frequently than married people, and they stay in hospitals twice as long for identical illnesses."<sup>1</sup>

While it may not be the most desirable for everyone to live without romantic relationships, none of us can have healthy lives without at least one or two healthy, close, loving relationships. Without such we limp along in the shadows of life eking out a lonely existence ... and die a little every day.

Dr. Lynch also reminds us that, "If we fail to form loving human relationships, our mental and physical health is in peril."

There is nothing worse than to be lonely. God knew this would happen when he called Jesus to return home to sit on his throne. He did not forget his disciples need for a Comforter.

Jesus did a lot in his three years of ministry. He nailed sin and death to the cross, he taught his disciples about life pre-resurrection and connected it to his life as the Risen Lord. He had given their faith birth. He ascended and told the disciples to be ready to have their souls reborn and set on fire. Like Jesus, the disciples could only serve God in the power of the Spirit. Jesus promised them he would

continue his ministry in them and with them by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Though they would miss the God-man Jesus, they would be comforted by the God-Spirit wherever they would go.

The Spirit has survived all these centuries in the church since then. Some wonder, “How?”

“Look at ME!!” boasted the fit old man, pounding a very flat and firm stomach, having just finished 100 sit-ups before a group of young people. “Fit as a fiddle! And you want to know why? I don’t smoke, I don’t drink, I don’t stay up late, and I don’t chase after loose women!!”

He smiled at them, teeth white, eyes aglitter, “And tomorrow — tomorrow, I’m going to celebrate my 90th birthday!!”

“Oh, really?” drawled one of the young onlookers, “How?”

We ask “how?” when the Church has spent a lot of time, effort and resources on keeping its rules and making sure everyone else does. We

have come to another birthday of the church: 2007 – 32= the 1975<sup>th</sup> birthday! The Spirit keeps on giving until it is no longer welcome. When the Spirit left the temple in Jerusalem the prophet cried, “Ichabod,” the Spirit has departed.

Is the Spirit of Christ alive? How many of see him working today? How are God’s people giving away the gifts they receive from the Spirit? What evidence is there of his convicting us of sin and righteousness and judgment? What is he teaching us?

The Spirit of God is Jesus’ Spirit living in the souls of people today. The Spirit is not an It, the Spirit is a he, because he is the person of Jesus Christ living in you as a deposit of his glory. The Spirit is simply God’s Presence. Retired professor of Chicago Divinity School, Martin Marty, says, you can’t define the Holy Spirit.

“No. You cannot bound, end or limit God — especially the God we know as the Spirit ... The Spirit, promised by the Father, connected with Jesus Christ, comes to us when we cannot naturally come to him. And there are no limits, no ends to what God would work now through us. So we do not define. We pray: ‘Come, Holy Spirit!’”

Come, Holy Spirit! Would you pray with me as I lead you and say, “Come, Holy Spirit! (Come, Holy Spirit!) Come and fill my soul! (Come and fill my soul!) Glorify Jesus in my life! (Glorify Jesus in my life!) Give me the Spirit of truth! (Give me the Spirit of truth!) Let me love as Jesus loved! (Let me love as Jesus loved!) Light a fire in my

heart! (Light a fire in my heart!) May it burn forever! (May it burn forever!) May we keep Jesus word! (May we keep his word!) Amen!

Veni, Spiritus Sanctus! Come Holy Spirit! These are the words in Latin we pray when a person is ordained in our denomination. They were prayed over me and you will hear them next Saturday prayed over Marcia Tyrriver during her ordination.

The Pentecostal Spirit is our birthright. In whatever language we say it the Spirit is God's promise that we are not alone. We are not alone in this work he has given us to do. The Spirit will work in you whatever he desires. "Come, Holy Spirit!" The one who has the Spirit will do the works of Jesus and even greater works. Keep Jesus commandments and then watch what he will do. When he comes the church is alive. When he leaves the church is dead.

Future celebrations of the Church's birthday are thankfully NOT in the hands of tabloids. The satirical tabloid *The Onion*, once reported, "Calling the Holy Trinity "overstaffed and over budget," God announced plans Monday to downsize the group by slowly phasing out the Holy Ghost. "Given the poor economic climate and the unclear nature of the Holy Ghost's duties, I felt this was a sensible and necessary decision," God said. "The Holy Ghost will be given fewer and fewer responsibilities until His formal resignation from Trinity duty following Easter services on April 20. Thereafter, the Father and the Son shall be referred to as the Holy Duo."

The work of the Holy Spirit and his future in our church is now in our hands. Keep the Spirit in the Holy Trinity before he resigns. And let's put him to work! Our doctors tell us that in the physical realm, "Use it or lose it." Is it less true with the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Hear the voices of praise to God in multiple languages around the world as we give thanks to our Lord for sending his Holy Comforter. The Spirit has come! May he dwell mightily in all who will let him. The Spirit has come! May he not leave us of a broken-heart. Amen.

- 1. Loneliness Can Break Your Heart:

<http://www.actsworld.org/articles/article.php?i=895&d=2&c=5>

—theonion.com/content/node/31330/print. Retrieved May 26, 2007.