

## Homily for Pentecost 2009

Father David I. Giffen

I speak to you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

I don't know how many of you are baseball fans, or perhaps familiar with the franchise which plays out of Pittsburgh – but for more than six decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Pittsburgh Pirates played their games, at a Stadium called Forbes Field. From 1909 to 1971 the beloved home town team played at a Stadium which saw them through two world wars, a great depression, and many other conflicts which took their husbands and their sons far beyond their borders.

In this place of solace and on this field of dreams, the people of their city found a place where for 2 or 3 hours, on any given night, the troubles of the world could not penetrate the shelter, which their Stadium provided.

But like all buildings, Forbes Field came to see its day, and in 1971, the team vacated and moved on to a new venue for competition.

At the turn of the century however, the city of Pittsburgh raised up a new plan for a resurrected Stadium on a new site. They would build this new venue recalling the great memories of generations past; a new stadium which would be modeled after the Great Forbes Field, rebuilding much of the structure almost brick by brick. The design of the ballpark's archways, the lighting, and stadium outlook could not have been more similar – many of the old timer's who grew up at the historic Forbes, could not believe their eyes.

But as one reporter commented soon after the stadium's completion, there was certainly one difference this time 'round. One difference that the fans would likely never see, and one difference the players might never even know.

Like at every major Baseball Diamond throughout the Major Leagues, beneath the bleachers and all the vendors' stands, in a place that usually goes quite unnoticed, is the umpire's locker room.

At this new Field in the city of Pittsburgh, at this restored and resurrected Park; there was one major difference to be found. The original Forbes Field had only *one* umpires locker room – while the new field had *two* – Forbes Field had only a men's umpire room, and this new field, saw fit for a women's too.

You see, Major League Baseball doesn't have any women umpires, and it never has. But for the designers and architects of this renewed, resurrected and transfigured place – something told them that somewhere down the road; there might just be a need for that new space.

The Spirit of God calls us into uncharted waters, and places we thought we might never go.

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Scripture tells us this morning that yet again the apostles were gathered together, trying to decide what to do next. Emotional and exhausted they tried to catch their breath. For in a period of less than two months, their leader had broken bread with them, been arrested before their eyes, been beaten within an inch of his life, been crucified upon a cross, rose from his death, preached and proclaimed among them again, and finally ascended into heaven to sit at the right of the Father – a busy couple months to say the least.

Some of them so certain that it was time to build, to get out and proclaim the good news; while others sat there wanting to wait, for Jesus would return again. And some just so tired and so torn from the struggle, the roller coaster which they had been on. But what

they all shared, what they couldn't possibly help but wonder, was "where would they go from here?"

From amidst the unknown of their future, and the letting go of their past, came the Spirit that they had been promised, and a baptism like none before. And if you thought it was going to get *simpler*, or *easier*, just because God kept his promise, then you just don't know this God. Because this spirit which had come upon them, heard them speaking in new language and tongue.

What languages we might ask? How could this possibly be? We just don't know the answer. But what we do know is this. The gift that they had been given, the language which they could share, would give all of God's children a voice – for the words "peace be with you," and "the body of Christ" – would translate into every kind speech.

But this gift that they had been given would not come without effect – for so many had never heard the good news. On this Pentecost morning, gathered together they realized how much work there was still to do. The spirit had called them one by one, to the furthest corners of the globe; to baptize, to break bread, to care for the poor, and to witness to what they had seen.

No longer would language build up walls, preventing them from spreading the word. It was time to respond and to stand up tall; it was time to go out into the world. It was time to live out the gospel commands that Jesus had so often spoken. So that in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, the peoples of every language, would know that they were God's children too.

Without their messiah before them, they were led out into the world, 'spirit filled' and renewed.

For the Spirit of God calls us into uncharted waters, and places we thought we might never go.

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Two weeks ago today, we offered a fond farewell to our Dean, and Bishop Elect. We celebrated the ministry which Terry offered this Cathedral Church, and the ministry this Cathedral Church offered Terry. We were very fortunate that morning to have Bishop Bob Townshend with us to break open the word and share his reflections. Bishop Townshend reminded us that although we were saying goodbye to the way things have been, we must also open our hearts, to receive the new life, of the way things *will be*.

Bishop Townshend offered us a challenge, telling us, "It's *your* move!"

We, the people of Saint Paul's, stand firmly at the crossroads of the Pentecost, both literally, and figuratively. We have said goodbye to the way things have been, and are not quite sure what God has in store for us next. We walk forward in the knowledge that our story *will* continue, but wait to see who will help us write the next chapter of our book.

Like the apostles gathered together so many years ago, we too *await* on this Pentecost Sunday; some may want to get out build, while others wait for a Dean to return.

Yet, *our ministry* cannot be halted.

There are too many mouths to feed in the basement of this church for us to stop and wait just one minute. There are too many youth on Friday nights who need the message of a God who loves them.

The apostles sat huddled together waiting for the future to happen to them, not sure what would happen next. And in that Pentecost moment, the Holy Spirit awakened them, and reminded them of

who they had been; that with Christ, and in Christ, they were who God called them to be – that living in the Spirit, and with one another, they must continue their ministry.

I echo the words of Bishop Townshend from two weeks ago today. It is *your* move. We are not a people who wait for the future to happen to us another day. We are a people who walk 'spirit filled' into the future, transforming lives along the way.

The Fellowship Center needs our support, and so does the Daily Bread. Children's Ministry needs to continue and the youth want so badly to be included. Each one of us here today has so much to offer the other – how could we possibly wait?

The past is behind us, and the future is ahead – but the Spirit of God is upon us **now** and calling us to do *great things*. To baptize, to break bread, to care for the poor, and to witness to what we have seen – to continually become who God calls us to be.

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Last week I was privileged to hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu give a Homily in which he urged the congregation, "Become who you are!"

I say to you today, remember who we have been, be excited about who we are becoming, and in this moment, in the presence one another and filled with the Spirit of God, my brothers and sisters I challenge you, don't wait – let us become, **who we are!**"