

Lord, Pour out Your Holy Spirit

John 7:37-39

May 24, 2026 (Pen.-A)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:37-39 NIV)

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dear fellow believers:

When you think of Pentecost, which of the four elements—water, earth, air, and fire—come to your mind first? Naturally, fire. On Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit was accompanied by what looked like flames of fire resting on the disciples' heads. Today we prayed for the Spirit to "rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love." In the Antiphon for Pentecost, I read: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love."

But in today's gospel reading, Jesus compared the coming of the Holy Spirit like water. He invites the thirsty to drink of "rivers of living water." At this Festival of Pentecost, let's think of that image of water as we pray: **Lord, Pour out Your Holy Spirit.**

Jesus was speaking on the last and greatest day of the Festival of Tabernacles, held by the Jews in October to commemorate the Israelites' living in tents or booths during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Jesus saw the crowds coming into the courtyard. He knew that many of them were thirsting for a Savior-God, and they would not be able to find salvation in all their rituals and sacrifices and observances of the law. So he called out to them: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink."

Are you thirsty? Thirsty in your soul? When God's law identifies the sins that we've done, like a mirror pointing out our failures, we thirst for God to set us free from sin, to forgive us. In our hearts often broken by sadness and loss, we thirst for comfort. In this world that is filled with unrest and hostility, and our minds get no rest, we thirst for peace.

We thirst for Jesus. He came into this world to pay for the sins of all people; he came to bind up the broken-hearted; he came as the Prince of Peace to provide peace with God and bring peace of mind. Yet in our sinful state we are unable to come to Jesus; Paul pointed out, "The sinful mind is hostile to God" (Ro. 8:7). We read in today's epistle reading, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

So, when Jesus said, "Come to me, and I will quench your thirst," Jesus was promising them the Holy Spirit, "whom those who believed in him were later to receive." Once Jesus was glorified, that is, when he rose from the dead and ascended on high, he would pour out his Holy Spirit in abundance: Through the Word proclaimed on Pentecost, through Holy Baptism, which Jesus calls being "born of water and the Spirit," and through Holy Communion, where he gives us his own

body and blood in the elements of bread and wine. By those means of grace our soul's thirst is quenched.

"Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit." We pray this when we come to Jesus at church or at home when we have a devotion, or in a prayer group with others. When we're away from the means of grace, we too get thirsty. But like a pitcher of ice water filling our water jars, the Holy Spirit comes to us as we hear the Bible tell us: "Your sins are indeed forgiven. Jesus has destroyed the power of the devil and death itself. You are at peace with God." Drink up, fellow believers: The Holy Spirit is here to quench our soul's thirst!

Jesus continued the water illustration with this bold statement: "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." The prophets had spoken of these rivers of living water years before: The Lord promised through Isaiah (58:11), "You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." And in Zechariah (14:8): "On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem." Not just any water, but *living* water will flow out. Not just a trickle, but streams, rivers flowing out. Picture the desert in the southwestern United States being transformed into the Amazon rain forest. That's what the coming of the Holy Spirit is like: Gushing, plentiful waters turning us from desert-like unbelief to life-giving faith!

And notice that Jesus said this will flow "from within them." Literally, Jesus said, "from the belly," from deep inside of us. The life-giving waters of the Holy Spirit not only enter into us, but from us, or through us. Once we've come to faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit, we can be a resource, or a "reservoir" if you will, for other people to receive the life-giving waters of the Spirit. We get filled up with that Word, and then we can pour it out for others to get a drink.

An American Lutheran theologian from the 19th century, C.F.W. Walther, described the force of the gospel in the life of a believer: "Faith cannot be shut in. It is like a sea to be tapped: it rushes irresistibly through any proper opening that can be made for it. A believer...cannot but profess the gospel before people, even though he perceives that he will reap nothing but ridicule and scorn for it." The early apostles, filled with the Spirit, demonstrated that too when they kept proclaiming Jesus despite warnings from government officials. With them, we too will say, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19)."

This spring we've had an abundance of rain showers and storms, resulting in moist ground and plentiful water for farmers and gardeners. That water will pay dividends if and when the weather starts to dry up. We have also been richly blessed with the Holy Spirit. God has poured him out on us abundantly through the means of grace. Store it up for the dry times of your life, and share this water with those who are thirsty now, that the Spirit may refresh their lives. May this always be our prayer: "Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit, and keep pouring him out on us and the world through the spread of your gospel!" Amen.