



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

Sunday, May 19th, 2013 – Whitsunday

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send
in my name, he shall teach you all things...*

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
And of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

Last week, the daily schedule of activities for one of the facilities for which St. Stephen's provides church services had listed in our time slot the heading: "Spiritual Service." The old categories of "St. Joseph's Church Service" and "St. Stephen's Church Service" had been replaced with the simple "Spiritual Service." The new activities director had tried to find a "non-denominational" group to hold services, but failing that, decided to make the services in place appear a bit more generic. (One size fits all, so to speak.)

I was, initially, somewhat peeved, but on reflecting that Pentecost Sunday was at hand, I thought I'd give it the benefit of the doubt and assume that they recognized both churches as centered in the Holy Spirit and were trying to do their part to promote ecumenical relations in the new nomenclature.

Pentecost comes fifty days after Easter and marks the birth of the Church through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples who are empowered by the Spirit to leave their closed up, frightened, waiting behind, and

proclaim the gospel message. Their peculiar witness becomes public. It is universal and available to all people who “do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” Out of the Babel of nations, out of the differences and diversities of tongues and cultures, one thing is heard: the good news of our salvation through our redemption in Jesus Christ.

We are united in our praise of God. The essential teachings of the Church are comprehensive and unifying. Without them we fall into disarray and confusion, a babble of tongues and conflicting opinions, a confusion of noise and nonsense. When we subordinate the teachings of Faith in God’s revelation of himself to us in Jesus Christ, to our individual experiences we become divided, alienated from each other. The challenge is to gather up the broken fragments of human experience into the unifying vision of God. The healing of our broken humanity is to be found in our being raised up into the mystery of

the love of God revealed and proclaimed in the life of the Church faithful to that mystery.

We participate in the eternal being of God by the descending and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. It appears as a wonderful event, an ecstatic experience, “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” and “cloven tongues of fire.” The experience of Pentecost both humbles and exalts us.. It signals the redemption and the sanctification of the experiences of our lives by gathering them into union with God and each other in God’s Holy Church. *Amen*