

This passage in Acts 2 is still the day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost was a display of God's creative power where the Holy Spirit fills the apostles and they begin to give witness to the crucified and risen Christ. Our text for today is later in the story, after the gift of the Holy Spirit was dispersed among a diverse crowd, after Peter's sermon has ended, and after the creation of the mega church with the 3,000 baptisms in one day. The new community gathered as one full of generosity, fellowship, mutuality, teaching, and worship.

The one thing which has caught my attention today in my present reading is the difference of the type of community which is being formed. Usually when we think of the Christian community, it is one that we love and are comfortable in. We want others to come and see the joy and security we experience in this community.

The example of the man born blind fits this familiar image of being incorporated into a community. The man born blind used to sit along the road and beg. He was an outcast because he could not earn a living and because he was not able to participate as a husband or son or father in supporting a family. But when Jesus healed him and welcomed him, he was brought into the faith community. This is a comfortable image for us in the church, having people join our fellowship, and hoping they appreciate our gathering.

What is happening in this early community on the Day of Pentecost is different.

The people gathered now devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship are a community of people who are travelers. They are not from Jerusalem. They are the ones, about 120, who are still there after crucifixion. Most of them are Galileans. They probably farm or fish for a living, but now that they have committed themselves to Christ and are gathering around Jerusalem but there is likely no place for them to work.

They have gone from a place of financial security, dependable daily food, and a known community of support to an existence of being at risk because of their witness to Christ. If they are now in a new place without work, they are gathered around a totally new group of people, and they are followers of Jesus who was just crucified as King of the Jews, their life is suddenly one where they are experiencing great risk.

Yet their response to this new way of life is a radical inwardly focused generosity and outwardly focused goodwill. They were living in the context of the leading of the Holy Spirit. They were being formed by practices of faith we still recognize today. They were forming an identity, with a shared vocabulary and a set of priorities which helped them live in that time.

We are more aware today of the risks that are always a part of life since so many aspects of our regular daily life have been disrupted. One of the silver linings in this time has my becoming aware of how our practices of faith are such an asset for us now.

Like the followers of Jesus in our text, we are finding new ways to gather, and a new community. Some of that is online, where St. John's people with internet access can join in worship. And we are reaching some new people, and please know that we love that you are sharing in the word and song with us. Let us know what is meaningful to you.

We are finding that our TV Ministry is more important than ever as it connects with many who can watch on Sundays from their homes. And we are creating new practices by sending liturgies, hymn texts, and meditations by mail to those who cannot connect by internet. So we are forming new practices and connecting in new ways that keep the people of St. John's grounded in faith and life.

What we have in common is a shared word, songs of faith, prayers joined as one and all gathered by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Other things that are happening at St. John's continue to be signs of Goodness as people reach out to help, making masks, or ac

Faith practices, how important that is in this new community. Practices aren't meant to be made into an unchanging way of life for the Christian, rather they are meant to prepare us to be ready for the changes we will experience as we go through life.