



May 11, Pentecost Sunday

Readings:

1: Acts 2:1-11
 Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34
 2: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
 Gospel: John 20:19-23

By Sharon K. Perkins
 Catholic News Service

In April of 1994, a large and powerful tornado ripped through my hometown and the house where I had grown up, forcing my parents to take shelter in a stairway closet while the roof above them was lifted free of the structure and the nearby garage was torn from its concrete slab. It also tore through the thick stand of mature pecan trees that for decades had divided our property from the neighbors', marking a clear path, making visible what had been previously hidden from view and changing the landscape forever.

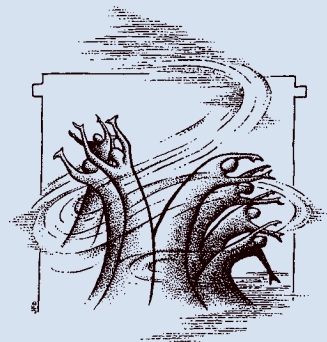
The Hebrew Scriptures often relied on the metaphor of wind to signify the appearance of God in this same way. It was with a driving wind that Yahweh parted the waters of the Red Sea and opened up the path to the Promised Land for Israel. And while no rooftops were blown away in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the changes wrought by that tempest were profound. People of all nations were able to hear of the mighty acts of God in their own language. The previous barriers of religion, language and ethnicity proved to be no match

for the "driving wind" of the Spirit, and centuries-old barriers between Jew and Gentile would become obsolete in the wake of its power.

For those first disciples of Jesus, the "landscape" of their world was changed forever as they, in turn, were empowered to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all parts of the known world.

In our world today, global telecommunications and rapid travel have done away with geographic obstacles of distance that were previously insurmountable – and yet in an effort to protect our own "landscapes," we allow barriers to remain among one another, even within our own parishes and neighborhoods.

Fear of change and anxieties about letting those who are "different" into our world occupy our energies and sap our resources, drowning out the declaration of the mighty works of God in our midst. The psalmist declares that when God sends out his Spirit, the "face of the earth" will be renewed. It is an open invitation to allow our landscape to be changed, through the power of his Spirit.



"And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were."

– Acts 2:2 a

QUESTIONS:

What recent changes have threatened the comfort of your own personal "landscape"? In what way can you welcome these changes as evidence of the movement of God's Spirit?

Challenge of peace still faces us



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Twenty-five years ago, on May 3, 1983, the Catholic bishops of the United States published the document, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response." This document was the result of three years of work by the bishops, beginning in the fall of 1980.

This document grew from a concern of the Catholic bishops in the midst of a world troubled by nuclear arms and the threats of war. Before the bishops' document, the Catholic bishops of the world had spoken out for peace in the Second Vatican Council document, "The Church in the Modern World." Blessed John XXIII had written an encyclical letter, "Peace on Earth." Succeeding popes, Paul VI at the United Nations in 1965 and John Paul II, had spoken out for peace and the need to resolve differences between nations in peaceful ways. John Paul II specifically urged President Bush not to wage a preventive war against Iraq.

The message of the Catholic bishops is as important if not more so in our present day. Some of the principles the

bishops enunciated in their document were the following: Catholic teaching begins with a presumption against war and for peaceful settlement of disputes.

Every nation has a right and duty to defend itself against unjust aggression, but an offensive war of any kind is not morally justifiable. Even a defensive response to an unjust attack which causes so much destruction that it violates the principle of proportionality, or one in which civilians are killed, violating the principle of discrimination, goes beyond the limits of legitimate defense. No defensive strategy, nuclear or conventional, which exceeds the limits of proportionality or discrimination, is morally permissible.

The bishops did reaffirm the "just war" theory that "...governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defense, once all peace efforts have failed" ("Church in the Modern World," No. 79). At the same time, they supported the value of non-violence and those who choose to be conscientious objectors to all wars or to a particular war.

This teaching on non-vio-

lence and conscientious objection has received official approval in the Catholic Church recently with the beatification of Franz Jaeggerstaetter. He was a young married Austrian with children at the beginning of Hitler's rise to power. Despite admonitions from his bishop and pastor to join the German army lest he face imprisonment and even death,

Jaeggerstaetter declared that his conscience did not permit him to join the military. He was arrested and was told that he would be executed if he did not change his mind and enter the mili-

tary. He refused. He was executed on Aug. 9, 1946. He was beatified Oct. 26, 2007.

The message of the Catholic bishops 25 years ago is as valid today as it was in 1983. Pax Christi USA and locally Pax Christi New Orleans continue to work to end the war in Iraq and challenge our national leaders to find peaceful ways to solve the challenges that face our world.

For more information about Pax Christi New Orleans, see www.paxchristino.org.

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