

The message I drew from this morning's reading will not be popular in denominational offices, the Vatican, nor in seminaries. Yet, it is very consistent with the message of the Bible, with Jesus' teachings and what Christians of all traditions believe. That message is that only God knows who has received the Holy Spirit. Only God knows who has been called to spread Jesus' Good News. Only God knows who has it right.

Today we celebrate the day that Jesus' disciples received the gift for which he told them to wait in Jerusalem, the gift that hit them like a hurricane and also hit several thousand other people, starting Jesus' church and spreading like wildfire.

Think of the bewilderment and surprise of those in Jerusalem that morning, those who may not have known Jesus at all. Suddenly they are speaking and understanding languages they did not know that morning when they rose from their beds. God, once again, was the one who acted, who showed the awesome power and who surprised us. I remembered, when I read the Hebrew Bible lesson from the book of Numbers, Dan telling me a little while back that he had earned an important certification. I doubt that he is a better counselor with the certification than he was before he got it. He was no more caring, no better at analyzing behavior or communicating with clients. The only thing that had changed was his personal marketability. I think that was a good thing for he and his family, but it made little difference in his ability to help people.

When I was working in the computer industry, I worked closely with a man that helped me realize the importance of diplomas, certificates, licenses, and official recognitions to success. My friend started working for the company right after high school and worked his way up from the mail room to a senior technical position. I was a senior manager and know how hard it was to promote him and hire him for important jobs because of his lack of a college degree. At the same time, he was recognized as a deep thinker, a skilled analyst, a strategist, and a planner. But, without the certifications, there was always a question.

Moses recognized the many unpredictable ways that God could and did act. In this morning's story, a group of elders, gathered in the tent of meeting, receive a wee bit of God's Spirit and for a short time are filled with visions and predictions. I don't know about you but I find it hard to get my mind around the process described: God "took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders." Does this sound like Peter Pan? Like the Spirit is like fairy dust? I am just an older engineer and can be too literal. Somehow it is easier for me get my head around rushing wind and tongues of fire. I prefer receiving the Spirit as a permanent gift than as something that wears off. "I had the Holy Spirit, but I got better."

When Eldad and Medad, who were not members of the 70 elders that received the bit of the Spirit in the tent, started prophesying in the camp, demonstrating that they had received the Spirit, Joshua, thinking politically, wanted to stop them. In politics power is

to be collected and hoarded, not spread around. Moses, who was never political, responded: "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!".

I want to join in Moses' thinking this morning hoping and praying that each of you have received the Spirit. You don't need seminary or Bible School. You don't need a diploma or license to share the Good News, You don't even have to know what to say. God's Spirit will provide what you need.