E Pluribus Unum

[Text - Acts 2:1-21]

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E Pluribus Unum... No, I am not speaking in tongues; I'm simply reciting the de facto motto of the United States, since it's founding: *E Pluribus Unum* - "Out of many, One". Now, in 1956 at the height of the Cold War, Congress did replace this broadly welcoming and inclusive motto with the more narrowly exclusive "In God *We* Trust". This was to differentiate us from those godless communists. Nevertheless, *E Pluribus Unum* remains deeply ingrained in our nation's DNA. We are a nation of immigrants - people from different countries and cultures, races and religions, languages and traditions - who are made more complete and commendable because of the rich diversity of our multiple backgrounds.

Long ago on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gathered people from many different cultures, languages and backgrounds, and brought them together as One. Today, it is critically important that we continue to heed that Pentecost message of inclusion and unity - not just as the Church, but also as a nation, and as the One Human Family. Pentecost is a celebration of the bridging of differences, and the building of community. It's a wonderful reminder that whenever and wherever people are open to the unifying Spirit of Divine Love, we will be able to hear and understand one another so much better. Our eyes and our hearts will be open to recognize that there really is much more that unites us, than divides us.

Unfortunately, there are a growing number of political figures and organizations in our nation and throughout the world today that thrive on stirring-up divisiveness, creating chaos, and pandering to peoples fears and prejudices. They intentionally seek to build tensions and drive wedges between cultural subsets, such as Black and White, Christian and Muslim, straight and gay, rich and poor - as if people were categorically polar opposites. This destructive, divisive spirit can delude us into thinking that those who are different from us in any

way, are different from us in every way. Fortunately, there is also a Divine Spirit who assures us that “different” does not mean “deficient”. A Holy Spirit who strives to make people holy, and to make people *whole* - to remind us that at our core, we are *all* beloved daughters and sons of our One Divine Source .

In this morning’s Continuing Testament*,* Janet Hunt writes, “Perhaps the most amazing thing God does on the day of Pentecost is to break-down those things which divide us from one another. The real Power of the Holy Spirit is not found in the wind and the flames; it is discovered between us and among us and through us. It all begins with us understanding one another. After that, anything is possible!”

On that First Century Pentecost, the Holy Spirit’s intention is that *all* people - not just twelve disciples, not just long-winded preachers, but *every* child of the Holy One - experience and share that Divine Breath of Life and Love; to make sure that no one miss-out on the Good News because of linguistic, cultural, or social differences. I believe that the Holy Spirit desires the same thing on *this* Pentecost: That no one be excluded. That we all remember that we are all members of One Family. And that we put-forth a special effort to reach-out to those Family members who often are pushed-aside because of their gender identity, social status, religious, racial or cultural differences.

On that first Pentecost, those pyrotechnic tongues light a fire within each of Christ’s followers, igniting their passion to proclaim Divine Love and Grace in ways that are readily understood by all those who gather. And that’s an extremely relevant point for you and me to remember: that it’s not the multitudes who learn to speak the language of Christ’s followers. Instead, the Holy Spirit inspires those followers to effectively communicate with all those around them. They’re surrounded by an eclectic, international assemblage; yet somehow they can communicate their message to everyone present.

In the same way, you and I can communicate our message to all those around us, through Divinely inspired acts of compassion and welcome, inclusion and love. Because when our hearts are filled with

Divine Love, we will always find a way to express it and to make it known. We will remove the human-imposed barriers that set us apart. We will joyfully recognize all those around us as our genuine sisters and brothers. We will find new and creative ways to translate and communicate, to show-forth and to live-out the Good News of Jesus Christ. And though, at times, our words may be inadequate, our acts of kindness and compassion, openness and love will certainly be understandable to all!