

June 9: Pentecost Sunday

New Creation: Babel Undone

Readings: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Rom 8:8-17;
John 20:19-23 or John 14:15-16, 23b-26

Scripture: They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues... but each one heard them speaking in his own language. (Acts 2:4, 6)

Reflection: Striking, isn't it, the role that language plays in the process of creation-uncreation-re-creation we call redemption? \ In Genesis 1, God uses no tool other than Spirit-born words to draw all things out of the primal chaos. \ In Genesis 3, the serpent uses clever words to skew the human beings' first choice. \ In its wake, \ language-the most human way of bonding us together in mutual understanding \- turned adversarial, \ driving the first couple apart. \ That original division spreads until \ in Genesis 11, \ the people, still misled by the serpent's subtly, \ seeing God and us humanity in competition, \ started to build a tower to reach the heavens \- perhaps to seize the divine throne for themselves? \ God thwarted their plan by wrecking their communication system, \ confusing their language \ so they couldn't understand one another and so couldn't cooperate. \ Hostile, \ competitive, \

destructive language remained a hallmark of our human interchange ever after.\

Until Pentecost.\ This time, God sent the Spirit to draw all people together by the Gospel preached in all languages all hearers\ could understand.\ Thus the new creation begins.\

I've had the painful experience of destructive words spoken\ and bonds of respect,\ love,\ and communion broken.\ It happens at the breakfast table or in the United Nations\ or at the edges of two ethnic neighborhoods,\ where one group throws verbal sticks and stones at another.\ And I have learned the hard way\ that verbal weapons of division,\ once spoken, can never be taken back.\ But with the advent of the Spirit\ breathed out by Jesus on the cross to bring together what sin had long rent asunder,\ I can learn a new language.\ Its most powerful speaker is Jesus,\ God's own word made flesh,\ who spoke,\ lived,\ and wielded\ against human hurt God's creative language of love.\ Receiving the Spirit, I receive the capacity to mend relationships my own Babels have broken apart.\ Let's talk to one another!

Meditation: Do you have any relationships that need mending?\ Receive the Holy Spirit to learn a more loving language.\

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit,\ and breathe into us God's language of love, that I may reweave lost harmonies\ and offer one

another hope that God's reign will prevail in my life by the power of the risen Christ among us. Amen