

## ***O Day Full of Grace***

May 28<sup>th</sup> is the Festival of Pentecost when we celebrate God's gift of the Holy Spirit, and the birthday of the Church. The Jewish harvest festival (The Festival of Weeks) happened fifty days after the Passover—hence the term “Pentecost” – from the Greek word meaning “fiftieth day.” The disciples of Jesus were gathered in Jerusalem, and as Jesus had promised them when he ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit—the gift of God's comfort, power and strength. While the disciples were gathered, the Holy Spirit filled them. They began to tell the pilgrims who were gathered in Jerusalem about Jesus. As they preached they were amazed to discover that all – regardless of what language they spoke – were able to understand them. God's Spirit descended upon the Apostles in tongues of fire, leaving no doubt that this was an important, life-changing event—that the Holy Spirit was truly present.

The opening hymn we sing today, ***O Day Full of Grace***, is one of the oldest and most profound of all Pentecost hymns. It is a Danish hymn appearing in manuscripts as early as 1450. In 1826, as part of the commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of Christianity being brought to Denmark, Nikolai Grundtvig rewrote the hymn and he is traditionally credited as its author. Grundtvig wrote a number of hymns in praise of the Holy Spirit, and he is known as the Poet of Whitsuntide (the Anglo-Saxon term for the week beginning on Pentecost/Whit Sunday, root word “wit” —meaning understanding)

Just as the work of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Christ, so this Pentecost hymn focuses on Christ and His redemptive work. The first two verses focus on His incarnation and birth, in language of “light” coming into a “dark” place, imagery common to the Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany seasons.

*O day full of grace that now we see Appearing on earth's horizon, Bring light from our God that we may be Replete in his joy this season. God, shine for us now in this dark place; Your name on our hearts emblazon.*

*O day full of grace, O blessed time, our Lord on the earth arriving; then came to the world that light sublime, Great joy for us all retrieving; for Jesus all mortals did embrace, all darkness and shame removing.*

The third verse brings us to the Cross, where Christ's work of salvation was completed by His atoning death, and to the empty tomb, where Christ's victory over sin and death was declared.

*For Christ bore our sins, and not his own, when he on the cross was hanging; And then he arose and moved the stone, That we, unto him belonging, might join with angelic hosts to raise our voices in endless singing.*

The fourth verse is the only one to mention Pentecost and the Holy Spirit explicitly. Pentecost is described in terms of God coming to us, and the work of the Holy Spirit as bringing “to us all” the “healing” provided by Christ's death and resurrection.

***God came to us then at Pentecost, His Spirit new life revealing, That we might no more from Him be lost, All darkness for us dispelling. His flame will the mark of sin efface And bring to us all His healing.***

The final stanza brings us to the end of our lives and into eternity, reminding us that the goal of the Holy Spirit's work is to “strengthen and keep us steadfast in His Word and in faith until our end”.

*When we on that final journey go That Christ is for us preparing, We'll gather in song, our hearts aglow, All joy of the heavens sharing, And walk in the light of God's own place, With angels his name adoring.*

**COME WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY AND RECEIVE ANEW THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

**Wear something RED to remind us all of the fire of the Holy Spirit**

**Join us after the worship service for a Memorial Day cookout in Luther Hall.**