

## A Community with a Mission

*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit  
and began to speak in different tongues  
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. – Acts 2:4*

Perhaps somewhere along the way you've heard the tale of the Tower of Babel. The story begins with our earliest ancestors all sharing one language. They settle in a valley and decide to build a city there with a tower so high that it will touch the sky. God chooses to foil their grandiose plans, not by striking the tower with lightning or sending a hurricane-force wind, but by confusing their language so that they could no longer communicate with one another. Without a common tongue there was no way to take on this common project, and so the people scattered, moving outward from the valley to settle the many other lands of the earth. It's an odd and ancient tale, probably intended to explain to children how the earth came to be comprised of so many different peoples living in so many different places and speaking so many different languages.

But if you've heard the tale of the Tower of Babel, perhaps you've also heard the story of Pentecost — the story of how peoples from all over the earth had gathered in Jerusalem bringing the first fruits of their harvest to offer in the Temple, when the Spirit of God swept into the place where Jesus' disciples were lodging, and the disciples began to speak in many different tongues. The people outside were drawn to the place by the ruckus they heard going on inside and marveled that — no matter where in the world they had journeyed from — they could all understand what was being spoken by the disciples. Language was no longer a barrier in the city of Jerusalem that day. The Spirit of God had drawn them all together so that they might become a new community. It was as if the separation between peoples that had existed since the time of Babel was being undone. They could understand one another again, perhaps preparing them to take on a new grand project.

Each year, we close the 50 days of the Easter season by recalling the story of Pentecost. It reminds us that the Easter season is not just about overcoming individual fears and finding renewed personal hope. It is about the healing of a community that had been fractured by Jesus' death, so that those wounded by the trauma of this event could come back together again as one, prepared to take on a mission to the wider world. We recall that the same Spirit of God that swirled through Jesus' life, giving him strength and courage ... the same Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead when it looked as if the story had ended ... that same Spirit was now poured out on this renewed community, so that it, too, could be strong and courageous and continue Jesus' work.



# Pentecost, Easter Week 8

Continue to heal. Continue to bridge differences. Continue to bring hope when it looks like the story has ended.

In Catholic health ministry, we are part of that renewed community gathered on Pentecost. In the past couple of years, we have witnessed what it looks like when people are divided, and communication feels impossible. We've seen firsthand how easy it is to misunderstand each other's intentions and how hard it is to move forward in the same direction. Frankly, *we've been through a lot*. But we also know that we have not been abandoned. Like the earliest Christian community, we've been gifted with the Spirit of God that fills us with courage and strength, even when we would have thought we could not suit up in PPE one more time. We continue to heal and bridge and bring hope to others, even when not feeling hopeful ourselves. And we do so because we know ourselves to be part of a grand project much more noble than building a tall tower. We are building an ever-widening circle where all can find health and wholeness. We are helping to build the Kingdom of God.

Today with our sisters and brothers in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost, we pause with gratitude for the gift of the Holy Spirit that sustains us in our mission. And we pray for an ever-greater abundance of the Spirit's courage and strength in our lives. Come Holy Spirit, Come.