

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION FOR PENTECOST

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Kate: It was supposed to be just another ordinary morning in a large city. The sun had risen and everyone was about the business of getting up. The Pentecost holiday had brought many foreigners to the city, but Jerusalem, a capital city in the ancient world, was accustomed to such crowds and enjoyed the economic boost such travelers and immigrants gave to its citizens. Soon the market places would be filled with hawkers and peddlers, goods and baubles, local customers looking for bargains and an abundance of new customers eager for souvenirs and the fabled local specialties of this Jewish center. The weather forecast predicted another clear, hot, cloudless day in this dry desert region. With hardly a breeze to refresh the shoppers, this would be a great market day, with shoppers gladly gathering under the shop awnings to escape the fearsome sun, at the same time drawing nearer to the tempting market goods for sale.

Brother Bede: But suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind. The apostles of Jesus, His mother and closest friends, felt it fill the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all of these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

Kate: My friends, most people woke up today thinking it is just another ordinary day. It is once again the time of Pentecost in a large city. Today the market places will be open, shopping malls will again entice local customers as well as foreign visitors to buy goods, souvenirs, and the fabled local specialties of the Chicagoland area. Store owners and restaurateurs will hope for the mild late spring weather of the Midwest to charm shoppers to stroll the Magnificent Mile of signature shops and to dine outdoors amid the blossoming trees and flowers. An alert ear on Michigan Avenue, State Street, or the many quaint neighborhoods could catch the sounds of English and the hundreds of other tongues spoken in this greater metropolitan area of over six million people. Most of these foreign tongues, however, speak of a different image of this city. They speak of it, not as a home, but as a dream of a home. They long to work here, to raise their families here, to pay their taxes here, adding their strong shoulders to others' shoulders for the well-being of all in this city of Big Shoulders.

But the fears of the native populace bar the fulfillment of this dream. Actual walls and legal walls have been raised to stop the swell of immigrants seeking refuge from persecution, starvation, and bleakest poverty.

The Spirit of God, however, knows no walls. Its strong driving wind blows through the dark fog of human fear. It blows with its gifts of wisdom and knowledge, allowing us to find ways to welcome immigrants while still protecting our national borders, ways to keep immigrating families united while securing our native citizenry from criminal threats, ways to expand our economic prosperity while paying just wages to all and protecting the jobs of native workers.

Brother Bede: Come, Holy Spirit. Blow your strong driving winds again in Chicago, this City of Wind. Assist us, the Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, in raising our voices to announce the promise of your power. Help all the people of Chicago be open to the winds of change that open doors locked against new ideas of immigration reform. Free all from the menacing fog of fear to look to the hope of a new day when once again the words at the base of the Statue of Liberty will ring true, "Send me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."