breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Amy Booker-Hirsch

Seventh Sunday of Easter

RCL: Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11
LM: Acts 1:12-14; Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8; 1 Peter 4:13-16; John 17:1-ha

Pentecost is one church holiday unscathed by North American commercialism! That is, right after Easter, I do not see "Happy Pentecost" decorations up in malls or in town halls. Many Christians have to think hard about what Pentecost means. I know I drilled into my confirmands that it is truly a celebration of die Church. I think they got the ideal They even knew it arrived 50 days after Easter, so it was on a different day every year according to the lunar calendar.

So get the Pentecost decorations out now! This is going to be one "spirited" holy day. Did you read that right? I hope so! Because Pentecost has not been co-opted by commercialism, whereas Christmas and Easter have no semblance to the original holy days celebrating Christ in our lives. But Pentecost remains a day to celebrate the Holy Spirit.

Remember that the disciples are hiding for fear of being crucified for being Christ's followers. I doubt that the disciples remember Jesus' words that he would be with them yet just a little while, that where he is going they cannot go. More potent is die fact that he tells them not to be troubled, because one is coming who will comfort and empower them. They have post-traumatic stress disorder, a real condition that affects people who have experienced loss and grief.

So embrace the disciples as truly human, with issues of loss and grief just like people today. Take them off the "holy shelf" and place them in the ebb and flow of life just like you know it. It is then that the Bible becomes a living book, full of people who are just like us. Yet they persevere in die Spirit—faithful, albeit not perfect.

The disciples in today's text from Acts want the kingdom of Israel restored! Furthermore, they want to know when that is going to happen. They haven't yet received die Spirit, so they are in the dark. They keep looking up for Jesus. Not to give Jesus' followers a bum rap for all that they do or don't do; they do some things very well. Case in point: they include women in Christ's followers and they devote themselves to prayer.

John's Gospel text treats us to Jesus' sympathy and compassion for his followers as he prays fervently for them. It is edifying to know that Jesus understands that they

cannot be taken out of the world, so he asks God to protect them from the evil that is rampant and pervasive in die world of that time.

Both Protestant and Catholic epistle passages underscore what emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual distress is at hand for those who claim Christ and Christ's Church. To bear the name Christian in that era meant suffering—a far cry from where most of us find ourselves in North America.

So get the candles ready, die streamers and confetti too. The fear, alienation, and evil swirling in the air as the disciples wait for further instructions are just around the corner. Centuries later, we have the knowledge of what happened on Pentecost to free die Church. Yet we still often live cowardly lives in light of die Spirit. It's never too late to claim die "Spirit of God" resting on us.

Prayer: Spirit One, reveal to us that which we need to do to live in die Spirit. Amen.

Musical Suggestions [LH]
Born of God, Eternal Savior—NCH 542
Oh, Love, How Deep—LBW 88
Like the Murmur of the Dove's Song—UMH 544
Come and Find the Quiet Center—PWS 2128