



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Pentecost (B) – Romans 8:22-27

Focus: *The Gift of the Spirit – The Gift of Hope!*

word of life

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” Romans 8:26 (NRSV)

Read Romans 8:22-27

[**Note:** The reading from Romans is the alternate Second Lesson for Pentecost Sunday, Series B in the Common Lectionary. The Bible study for the Acts 2 reading – the customary second lesson for the day – may be found at www.elca.org/dailydiscipleship.]

The festival of Pentecost celebrates the birth of the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost directs our attention to recognize and realize the Spirit’s presence and power in the life of the faithful.

1. *How would you describe the Holy Spirit?*
2. *How have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life?*

The lesson for today is a part of a longer treatise by Paul on the gift of the Spirit and the hope of believers of Christ. The verses assigned on this birthday of the Church begin with an image of childbirth: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now.” (vs. 22) The brokenness and suffering of the world includes all creation. For Paul, the struggle is universal; all of creation is in travail.

3. *Is it comforting or troubling to think that struggle involves all creation?*

But there is, as in childbirth, an anticipation of a new life to come – a life where pain and struggle will cease. The promised new life provides the faithful with a wonderful gift – the gift of hope. (vs. 24) For Paul, hope is seen in the context of struggle. It is not a pie-in-the-sky, one-day-by-and-by illusion. The groans and the pain still are present in the life of a follower of Christ. Hope is grounded in the painful realities of the world, yet hope is what sustains the follower in the midst of this reality. Paul encourages the church in Rome to wait with patience in anticipation of something greater yet to come.

4. *How do we experience hope in our lives?*
5. *Are there times when it is hard to have hope?*
6. *How does this passage address such times?*

Paul also points to another gift given to the faithful – the gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit aids in times of weakness (vs.26) and intercedes in prayer when there are no words.

Today’s reading from Romans is bracketed by two verses that are often read in times of struggle and pain. The section begins with a statement of hope: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18 NRSV) And the section continues with words of confident faith: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.” (Romans 8:28 NRSV) THANKS BE TO GOD!

7. *Describe circumstances in which these verses would be particularly meaningful.*
8. *Are hope, waiting, and patience related? How so?*

word *among us*

We as Christians live in an “in-between” time. Jesus, the Savior of the world, has already come and proclaimed the inbreaking of the kingdom, yet we await the promised coming of God’s reign in all its fullness. We still face suffering and pain in the world, but we have hope for what is yet to come.

It is a “pregnant” moment, and Paul uses the imagery of the labor of childbirth to describe the life of a Christian. There is anticipation of a hoped-for life to come. That future hope of new life impacts the present reality. It changes the way life is viewed and lived. Relationships are changed, and priorities are re-ordered.

1. *Do you find the imagery of childbirth meaningful? Why or why not?*
2. *How does life change when new life is expected?*

But a great deal of pain and strain is endured before the birth occurs. Paul views the whole creation “groaning in labor pains” while awaiting the hoped-for, promised new life. He urges the church in Rome to hang on with patience to the hope of what is yet to come. The new life will be birthed, but labor pains are experienced first.

Paul reminds the believers in every day and time that we are not alone in our labor pains. The Holy Spirit – like a faithful mid-wife – is with us through the delivery, comforts us, gives courage to face the struggle, and provides the gift of hope. The Spirit even intercedes on our behalf when the labor seems too much to bear and there are no words.

3. *Describe a time when you experienced labor pains as God prepared something “new” in your Christian life.*
4. *How does the Spirit intercede for you?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

We know about labor pains – literally and figuratively. We know the struggle of life and death, of hope for future life and the need for patience in the meantime. But hear the good news we can proclaim to a world aching for new life: We do not face the struggle alone. The Holy Spirit guides our every step and gives voice to our needs. The Spirit reminds us that there is One who endured the pain and suffering of the world, One who overcame death and suffering, One who ushered in new, resurrected life.

Our lives are forever changed because of this One. We are empowered to face the labor before us, for we have the hope of a new creation through the One – Jesus Christ.

5. *Name someone who lives with suffering yet manifests hope in Christ.*
6. *What opportunities do you have to proclaim the good news of God’s Spirit working in your life?*

Prayer

Be with us, O God, in our times of struggle. Send your Holy Spirit to remind us that You are with us even then; through Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

As you face the challenges of each day,
trust that God is with you
and knows your needs.

Daily Faith Practices

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