

What does this mean? Some of you are asking this very question right now. Like the temple-goers in the book of Acts. They thought they were going to the temple for just another weekly service. Nothing to see here. Just another sermon. Just another choir anthem. Just another gathering of the usual suspects. Just another passing of the offering plate. Put in your .2 cents and be on your way. Except we are told that on this day in Jerusalem are also gathered people of every creed and color. I took some liberties with the way Mason, Allie, and Brandon read the story for us. Luke, the writer of Acts says that in the crowd that day were Medes and Elamites, residents of Phrygia and Pamphylia, but we know them better as Hispanics and Haitians, people from Syria, Greenland, North and South Korea, immigrants *from the United States*, Israelis and Palestinians, together as one in a city—Jerusalem—that on this day has the regular temple-goers saying, what does this mean? What’s going on here? I can hear some of us saying it. I didn’t know the service was going to look like this today. Who put the children in charge? They don’t speak my language. They don’t sing my music. What does this mean? What’s going on here?

Luke tells us that it was all Jesus’ doing. It was Jesus who told his disciples to go to Jerusalem, and seeing as it was Jesus who also told his disciples to go into all the nations and preach the gospel, he must have known that in showing up in Jerusalem, they’d likely bring along every tribe and tongue with them.

“Go wait for me in Jerusalem, and there I will send you my Holy Spirit.”

So, that’s where they all are, and no one is more surprised to see them all there than the regular temple-goers, who have showed up expecting today to be just another day. But

on this day, God has decided it won't be just another. God has decided that today is not the day for coming in and going out. Today is the day to come in and go out like never before. Today is the day for promises made to become promises kept, for poverty to become history, for love to be shown. Bring on the Holy Spirit in a flaming ball of red fire!

How many of you watched the royal wedding yesterday? I did. The best part to me was the homily given by Bishop Michael Curry, the current president of the Episcopal Church here in the U.S., who reminded us of what the French philosopher and Jesuit priest de Chardin once said about fire. That the discovery and harnessing of fire has led to some of the greatest advances and technological achievements in human history. Fire has made it possible to cook food and provide sanitary ways of eating to reduce disease and sickness. Fire made possible the Bronze Age and the Industrial Revolution. Fire is what makes airplanes and cars go. Fire has an extraordinary power, and, says de Chardin, if humanity ever captures the power of love, it will be like discovering fire all over again. Because love is the power of fire.

On this day some 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came upon the church in fire. Why? Because fire has the power to burn away our hatreds. Fire has the power to strip us down, to show us—beyond our many different creeds and colors and languages and ways we believe—fire has the power to show us who we truly are.

It's a bit hard to imagine—given our current context—it's a bit hard to imagine any place that could be home to everyone these days. Not Jerusalem. Not our schools. Not our city streets. Not our borders. Not our temples and mosques and churches. But the Holy Spirit comes in fire today to show us that God will not be stopped at any border, that God is

coming anyway, to show us the power of love, the redemptive power of love to make us one.

I read a story some time ago. I don't recall where I read it or who wrote it. The story was about a man who was traveling in New York City and who went out for a walk one day only to get himself lost. Trying to find his way, he flagged down a police car to ask for directions. Much to the man's surprise, the police officer told the man to get in, that he would give him a ride and show him the way to his destination. About 10 blocks later the man and the police officer saw a little girl on the sidewalk who also appeared to be lost. They pulled over and asked the young girl, who couldn't have been more than 10, if she needed help finding her way home.

"Do you know the way home?"

The little girl, however, just looked at them with a blank stare and mumbled something that sounded a bit like Spanish. Which is when the police officer and the man realized that she didn't speak any English. And they didn't speak any Spanish. The police officer held out a trusting hand to the girl, which she must have understood, because she climbed into the back of the police car and sat next to the man, who didn't know how to tell the girl that he too was lost. As the police office started to drive around, the man motioned out the window at every turn, trying to ask the girl if she knew where she was. At one point the man recognized where he was, but he decided not to get out of the car, but instead to continue being lost with the little girl. So, along they rolled, up and down streets, sometimes going in circles, waiting, hoping the girl might see something to make her eyes light up. And that's when it happened. She rapped on the window, slung half her body over the back of the front seat and wildly pointed at something up ahead.

“Esa es mi iglesia! Esa es mi iglesia!”

“Do you know what she’s saying?” the police officer asked the man.

“Not a clue. I think she’s pointing at that church up there. But that can’t be her home.”

The police officer pulled over next to what looked more like an abandoned house than a church, but sure enough, a sign on the side of the building said, “Iglesia de Dios.” Still, the man tried to keep the girl from getting out.

“This...not your house. Where is your home?”

“No, esta es mi iglesia! Yo se’ come llegar a mi casa de aqui.”

Once again, the man and the police officer just looked at one another and shrugged.

“What does she mean? What do you think she means?”

“Esta es mi iglesia! Yo se’ come llegar a mi casa de aqui.”

Anyone know Spanish? I don’t either. My friend Claire tells me that it means, “This is my church. I know my way home from here.”

This is my church. I know my way home from here. What a thing to be able to say, not because one can find their way home from church, but because if you can find your way home from church then you’re already as good as home.

So welcome in and welcome home today. We’ve blown up some balloons for you. We’re waving our banners and we’ve put forth the very best we have to offer in our children, all to say, welcome home. God is here and here, is love. Amen.