

Friends of the Center

What does Pentecost mean to you?

In my personal journey, the significance of Pentecost goes far beyond mere abstract concepts or discourse; it's an intimately profound experience etched into the fabric of my earliest memories. Transport yourself to the year 1985, to the outskirts of a nameless city in South America. There, our existence was a precarious dance on the edge of misfortune, ensconced in a realm overshadowed by the menacing grip of drug lords and criminals. Our homes, fragile shelters amidst the chaos, teemed with vermin and disease-carrying insects, while the relentless tropical heat bore down upon us mercilessly. We were marooned in a desolate landscape, forsaken by public services and left to fend for ourselves in a world that had long forgotten our existence.

In this desolation, what hope could possibly flicker for a family like ours? Who would extend a caring hand in a place where countless others shared our plight? Mothers, their weary faces etched with the pain of uncertainty, day after day faced the grim reality that the next meal might elude us. Men, devoid of meaningful employment opportunities, resorted to toil in the sweltering sun, scraping their meager earnings by excavating the unyielding earth.

In this inhospitable place, my experience as Pentecost began; and the first lesson learned was that God Himself sought out someone as insignificant as me. I could never have found Him, but He came toward me according to His promise: "*In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...*". In a place forgotten by all, God did not forget me. This is Pentecost to me!

In that literal hole, on a street of red clay, a small and humble Pentecostal church painted in celestial blue was the place where the Church of Christ was gathered: men and women who professed their faith with joy. They welcomed us as family and spoke to us about the kingdom of God and the gospel of peace. As the scripture says, "*they were all gathered together.*" A new family, united in love and fellowship, living out the commitment of Christ's love, expressing the glory of the Lord: this is Pentecost to me!

The new life within the community of faith began to bear much fruit, as the Spirit distributed His gifts to all, so that "*...those who had gathered a lot had no surplus, and those who had gathered only a little had enough.*" The movement of the Spirit did not make everyone the same; but each with their own gift complemented the needs of others, producing a life of harmonious dependence on God. In every help received from brothers and sisters, in every victory achieved, in every battle won, many glories were given to Christ the Lord. This is Pentecost to me!

Among the many gifts received through the outpouring of the Spirit, I realized that one had a very special purpose and significance: the gift of speaking in new tongues. As the scripture says – "*...the crowd was bewildered,*



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because each one heard them speaking in their own language..." and that is exactly what happened. Now, filled with the Spirit, we could speak the language that others in our peripheral community could understand. We received the ability to communicate with people of all kinds, from every culture, from every mindset, and they could understand the wonders of the kingdom of God and give thanks to God, although some also considered us mad.

Those who once had no voice, now through the Spirit are prophets, dreaming dreams, and having visions, all with the same mindset as that of Christ Jesus: to bring the word of repentance and salvation to all. Filled with the Spirit, we received a voice not to speak of ourselves or our needs, but to proclaim Christ and His victory on the Cross of Calvary. This is Pentecost to me!

– Junior, Fernandes Wilson, MSD



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