

Strengthened for holiness (Psalm 104:24-34, 35b)

## **I've experienced Pentecost as sweet, serious, or neither.**

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June 2, 2017

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In the churches I've served, Pentecost has taken different forms. One church had a committee that arranged for red balloons in the sanctuary and encouraged congregants to wear red. I went along like a team player because I got to wear my red cowboy boots. In the fellowship hall after worship, instead of cookies we consumed a sugary birthday cake. We sang happy birthday to the church as children pushed in close to sneak fingers full of icing. Sweet Pentecost.

In another church we did nothing, save for wearing red stoles as our liturgy marked the final Sunday of Easter and the descent of the Holy Spirit on those first disciples. Serious Pentecost.

"Act in me, O Holy Spirit," says St. Augustine's prayer, "that my work, too, may be holy." In a life of ministry through the gift of the Spirit, Augustine's sense of holiness is what I hope to be strengthened for. It's not really sweet, and it's not really serious. It is faithful.

I walked into a woman's bedroom. Her husband said, "Play some music, Please. Anything. A crowd of folks just clomped in and paraded through here to say their goodbyes and their cell phones dinged, and—crap, it was everything but holy."

The song I pulled up on my phone was Tyler Lyle's "[I Will Follow Love All the Way Home](#)." I trust that she still had her sense of hearing as she followed love home and

the urgency of love followed her. It felt like a holy moment, graced by the Spirit.

Mary Oliver has a poem in *Felicity* called "The Gift." In it she gives voice to the process of aging and the holy power of love: "...Love still as one you loved, deeply / and without patience. Let God and the world / know you are grateful...."

It's as if Oliver joins the voice of the psalmist in Psalm 104 in giving praise to God, for "O LORD, how manifold are your works." We join too, praying that our meditations might be pleasing and that God might hear our song of praise, that God might know how grateful we are for the gift that has been given through the power of the Holy Spirit.