

# What's Worship Got to Do with It?

*Interpreting Life Liturgically*



CLÁUDIO CARVALHAES

With a prelude by PAUL GALBREATH  
and a postlude by JANET R. WALTON



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## WHAT'S WORSHIP GOT TO DO WITH IT?

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## At Pentecost

### Introductory Note

The season of Pentecost is developed here through some liturgical lenses taken from a local imaginary congregation that is celebrating Pentecost Sunday. This congregation combines the influences of various traditions and tries to avoid the differentiation between traditional, contemporary, emergent, multicultural, and Pentecostal worship services.

### Before We Go into the Sanctuary

At Pentecost I arrive early to church. I am way too excited to miss any part of it. We are going to celebrate the movement of God through the Holy Spirit as we celebrate once again the beginning of the church of Jesus Christ that has become my home, my family, my country, the place I belong. I will remember my ancestors and those who came before me and who prepared the way for my salvation and new life. How can I afford to miss that? I arrive early because I am afraid to miss the joyful singing of the choir outside of the building calling me to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, the pouring of God's glory upon us all and the whole world.

On Pentecost, the whole building and my brothers and my sisters are dressed up in intense reds, and the sanctuary has huge pieces of colored cloth hanging from the ceiling. At the door, people are wearing masks celebrating the craziness of Pentecost, the foolishness of this gospel. As we

arrive we are already singing from the top of our lungs, as if our tongues were on fire, excited about the manifestations of God's glory, witnessing to each other the miracles of God in our midst and around the world. Our bodies get in motion and we start dancing in joy to the Holy One!

Gloria in Excelsis Deo, Gloria, Gloria, Alleluia, Alleluia  
 Halle-, Halle-, Halle-lujah, Halle-, Halle-, Halle-lujah, Halle-, Halle-,  
 Halle-lujah,  
 Alleluia, Alleluia

Glorias and alleluias are sung outside with drums and tambourines and congas and from inside, guitars and the piano are continuing the melody. Our hands and hearts are lifted up to the skies giving God all the glory. We already know we must thank God for God's coming to our world through Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit to empower us and transform the world.

At Pentecost there is always this (non)sense of wondering why, like the disciples then, we get this "drunk" at 10 o'clock in the morning. Fear and trembling is everywhere, for the Spirit is already hovering around us. We never know what the Holy Spirit is about to do once again and we hold this excitement and trembling expectation at the same time deep in our hearts and at the shivering of our skins.

We come into the sanctuary led by a group of dancers who are weaving long pieces of cloth in red, yellow, and orange, creating flames throughout the sanctuary and keeping us on fire. The pieces of cloth in the ceiling are moving as well!

The dancers continue to dance throughout the sanctuary and the choir continues singing with us as we move to our seats. The music starts to fade and somebody takes the microphone and says something like a Call to Worship.

### Call to Worship

Somebody says, "Brothers and sisters tell me that the Spirit has never done anything in your life? Tell me that God has been silent throughout your life and has never spoken to you? Tell me you don't believe that God is about to do something new to us and to our world?"

And we all respond in different ways for there is no bulletin. "Alleluia," "thank you Jesus," and "God is good," are heard everywhere.

Somebody says, "Sisters and brothers, we have seen God doing wondrous things in our lives. Even the fact that we could be here today is a



miracle! God has spoken to us in loud and soft voices through people and things throughout history."

We all respond in various ways; here are some of the responses:

One says, "God has made me live up to this day and I am thankful to God almighty!"

Another says, "I have come this far because the Holy Spirit has given me faith to believe and continue on."

One says, "The Holy Spirit discovered me when I was almost gone. He took me from a pile of dirt and made me shine. As Psalm 113:7 says, 'God raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.'"

Another says, "My son was a prisoner to drugs and God gave him a new beginning."

One says, "I ain't telling anybody what the Holy Spirit did to me but I assure you this: the Spirit operated powerful miracles in my life."

Another says, "What can I say of God's wondrous presence in my life? I was nobody and God made me somebody!"

One says, "I didn't exist until I got here! Now I am found!"

Another says, "I felt completely invisible to society but the church shed the light of God on me!"

One says, "Our community has seen the dwindling of state resources, resources that are ours but never come here, but instead go to the rich neighborhoods. And yet, we are hanging on by a thread through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Another says, "I don't know how but God is making a way out of no way. Glory be to God!"

Then somebody says, "We must remember our ancestors, those who came before us! Those who prepared the way for us, those who were persecuted, those who lived under the sharp edge of the sword, those who offered their lives for a different way of living the gospel, those who were deeply affected by the Christian message and were transformed by the power of the Spirit and opened new paths in Jesus Christ: from the Apostle Paul to Saint Francis to Mother Teresa; from the disciples on the Emmaus road to the Waldensians; from the Ethiopian eunuch to Lydia and to Óscar Romero; from Mary and Mary Magdalene to Julian of Norwich and Dorothee Soelle; from Martha and Mary to Priscilla to Rosa Parks, to las Madres de Plaza de Mayo and las Comadres de El Salvador to Rigoberta Menchú; from Martin Luther King Jr. to Black Lives Matter! Let us now name those who have come before you who were moved by the Spirit to prepare the way of God for you."

We all mention name after name, and a crowd of witnesses fills the sanctuary and our hearts.

Somebody says, "And God is about to do something new in our lives and in the world once again! Behold, God is about to do a new thing!"

We all respond with alleluias and "Glory be to God."

### We Sing: "Hush, Somebody's Calling My Name"

The choir keeps singing, "Hush, Somebody's calling my name" and we can't sit down. Slowly, the song ends and a rush of bodies singing and moving are calmed down and we sit in the hush of silence.

### We Confess

Somebody starts to pray, saying, "God of love and kindness, have mercy on us . . . for we forget that you live in us through your Spirit.

"Have mercy on us for we don't expect the moving of your Spirit in us.

"Have mercy on us for we even fear that you will change things in our midst and turn us to other directions.

"Have mercy on us for we have forgotten that we are witnesses of this power and that we have a responsibility to each other, to the church of Christ, and to the entire world.

"Have mercy on us for we have abandoned your creation.

"Have mercy on us for we are destroying your creation with our uncontrollable desire to have more things than we need.

"Have mercy on us because our waters are polluted, our desire for stuff is incontrollable, and we think that there are no limits to whatever we want.

"Have mercy on us for we have confused unlimited capitalism with your unconditional grace.

"Have mercy on us because we have forgotten to live a communal life and have trusted more in our own wisdom and our own spirit than in the wisdom and in the Spirit of God that lives in our brothers and sisters.

"Have mercy on us for we don't see your face in the face of the poor.

"Have mercy on us for we don't have sustainable sources to help us deal with our daily needs: we have no hospitals, have no clinics for those with mental illness, we have no care for battered women, we have no care for pregnant teenagers, and we have no money to send our kids to college.

"Have mercy on us for our confession of lack is the confession of the abundance of few and there lies our evil forms of sin against you! Against ourselves!

"Have mercy on us for trusting more in the invisible hand of capitalism than in your visible providence through the hands of our brothers and sisters.

"Have mercy on us, O God."

And we respond singing the Guarani Kyrie:

Ore poriaju vereko nandejara

Ore poriaju vereko Jesucristo

### We Are Assured of God's Forgiveness

The dancers come from all places and pour water in the baptismal font while we sing.

### We Receive a Visit

We sit down and on a big screen a group of children from a church in Rwanda are waiting to sing to us live via Skype. They say, "Hi," and introduce themselves to us and say, "The Spirit of God be with you all!" We respond, "And also with you." Then they sing "Vuma Vuma: Believe in the Lord and you will be saved."<sup>1</sup> They tell us stories of eating, dancing, living, and going to school. It is our turn to sing back to them. We don't know exactly what to sing until somebody starts, "Jesus loves you, Yes, Jesus loves you . . . the Bible tells me so." We say goodbye to them, "May the Spirit of Pentecost keep you and strengthen you and empower you." Somebody stands in front of the camera and shouts to them, "We are here with you! We are here with you!" We don't know how this is possible but the fear of being forgotten makes us all feel desperate to hold on to ties with those we don't know well. Someone shouts, "We must know them better! They are precious to us!"

### We Confess Once Again

A sister then stands up and says, "Sisters and brothers I feel we need to keep on confessing our sins. Let us pray please!" She kneels and starts praying, "God of mercy, we confess that we keep mostly with people like ourselves and have not welcomed the stranger into our midst. We confess we have forgotten our brothers and sisters around the world. We confess that we have not allowed into our sanctuary the immigrant community who worships

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93pec2585xQ>.

God in this building on Sunday afternoons. We confess that we have locked the nursery room and put away the toy boxes so that their children will not mess up our spaces and our things. We can't quite figure out how we can still be loved by you, O God, but today, moved by your Holy Spirit, we can see our sins and turn back to you. On this Pentecost day, make us a new church! Fall afresh on us and make us a new church . . ."

As she prays the choir starts singing, "Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us . . ."

After the prayer she says, "Let us all talk to our elders and the pastor and let us invite this community to worship with us using both languages. Let them use this place as their own." And everybody says, "Amen!"

## We Sing

The choir starts singing "The Summons," by John Bell, and we join in:

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
 Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
 Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known?  
 will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
 Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
 Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
 Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
 Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
 Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
 and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?  
 Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
 Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,  
 through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
 Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
 In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.  
 Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

### We Pass the Peace of Christ

The music continues and we are ready to pass the peace of Christ to one another. Painters start painting a huge canvas on the chancel brushing colorful tones in circles, a whirlwind of movements. Dancing people surround the congregation with red scarves. As we receive the scarf with a holy kiss we hear the words, "The Spirit of God is in and around and through us dear brother. The Spirit of God is in and around and through us dear sister."

### We Read the Scriptures

The choir stops singing and there is silence. The sound of wind can be heard everywhere in the sanctuary. A Bible enters the sanctuary carried by a child and goes to the middle of the central aisle. The Pentecost story in Acts 2:1-21 is read. In the midst of the reading, drums, clashing cymbals, and trumpets embody the readings as sounds and words fill the sanctuary. The reading ends:

The word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

### The Sermon

The pastor starts her sermon by saying that Jesus has promised us the Kingdom of God and all we could do was build a church. People laugh. She continues, "However, Pentecost was not only the beginning of the church. Pentecost, or *Shavuot*, was a festival among the Jews also called the Feast of Weeks, the Latter First Fruits or Feast of Harvest. It was celebrated fifty days after Passover and was a joyful time of thanksgiving for the harvesting of the fruits of the earth. At Pentecost our hearts should be on high for the gift of *Pachamama*,<sup>2</sup> for the bountiful and gracious offerings of the fruits and all the food and everything we have that the earth continuously offers to us all. Thus, Pentecost is a mix of thanksgiving, of celebration of the fruits of the earth and the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the church. It is when those who don't count start to become important. That being said, we can now talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

At Pentecost people heard tongues of fire and were transformed. Three thousand people on that day. What the Spirit says turns people and things

2. That is what Native American people in Central and Latin America call the earth.

around. What we hear from God makes us who we are, and the hearing of God continuously makes us who we are constantly becoming. Thus, our autobiography relies heavily on our *otobiography*<sup>3</sup> and the words of others as well as the word of God! Tongues of fire continue to shape who we are to God and to our neighbors. What I mean by otobiography here is the hearing that defines our lives and shapes our biographies. The languages you hear, the stories you ponder, the testimonies you listen to carefully, the theologies you wonder about, all of these things heard effect your biography. For your biography is a result of many tongues in your ear. . . . Whose tongues of fire are you listening to?

At Pentecost, we remember that which cannot be remembered. At Pentecost we witness that which cannot be witnessed properly. We witness something beyond ourselves but fully part of ourselves! Fully divine, fully human! Beyond us, intimately ours! How can we keep from singing this absence, this full presence, in our lives?

At Pentecost we receive a revelation that transforms us in such a way that there is no going back, ever. We are visited by that which we cannot name, but we can't stop saying its name!

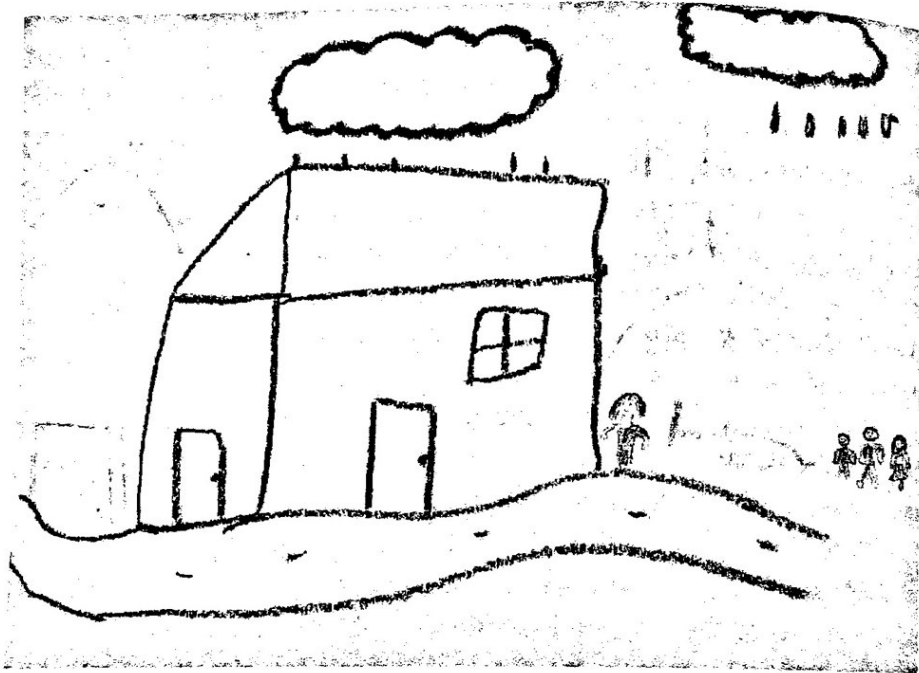
Pentecost prepares a time to go after the Holy Spirit in both grammatical ways: I mean, going after as searching for the Spirit to come, and also going afterwards, figuring out how the Holy Spirit has touched us.

Pentecost loosens up our theologies, for it is a time to wrestle once again with that which has no boundaries or contours, that which we can never nail down. Pentecost helps us realize that the Holy Spirit breaks down our arguments, undoes our finest theological assumptions, messes with our statements of faith and plays tricks on our serious disputes. The Spirit is free and comes and goes and moves and changes and appears whenever and wherever the Spirit wants. However, we can and must try to figure it out and work very hard to make our assertions and hopes and guesses in the best way possible, among people and communities in order to understand a little of how the Holy Spirit works in our midst.

The Holy Spirit is the wind who came down to the disciples and they were taken over by this force, by this presence that turned them around and made them go and tell the good news of Jesus Christ in other languages. I remember I was in a meeting with a Pentecostal group when I was a teenager and I was desperate to receive the gift of tongues. To my immense frustration, nothing happened to me. However, a friend of mine from another Presbyterian church was in the same meeting praying for the Holy Spirit to come, and all of sudden she stood up in the midst of us all and started

3. Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*.

to speak in Italian, a language she had never used or learned before: "Dio quanto ti amo, come io ti adoro, ogni onore e gloria a te, oggi e sempre" ("God, how much I love you, how much I adore you, honor and glory be given to you today and forever"). I was stunned by it and couldn't make any sense of it.



Nicson, "Felicidad (Happiness)"

Nicson is fifteen years old and traveled from Guatemala. In this picture he drew his home, family, and pet, "Hueso," with great care and a pondering disposition.

The Holy Spirit sets the imprisoned free. When I was a teenager, I used to see the Holy Spirit moving in various ways. Healing, transforming, and liberating people from their shackles, spiritual and social ones alike. I remember one day a woman came to my mother's house. She was going through a tough time and when I was praying for her a deep, scary voice came out of her mouth. "Don't touch me, let me go," this voice said. At the same time her body was thrown towards the wall and her face contorted. I was very scared but somehow could muster the strength to hold her arms and say, "In Jesus's name, the Holy Spirit will set you free, in Jesus's name, the Holy Spirit will set you free." In a few minutes her body was violently shaken and she was able to hear me and my mother again. We prayed for her and she left our home in peace. I know this is a very strange story for many of you but what I can say is that since that day, I live in wonder and awe.



A community of people got together and started a movement to reclaim unused land for poor people in Brazil and to bring about agrarian reform. Every time they were able to gain a piece of land they first knelt down and prayed the Lord's Prayer and thanked God for the new life that was about to begin! The Holy Spirit moves in wonderful and strange ways, brothers and sisters!

At Pentecost we learn that there is no distinction between body, reason, and Spirit. Leonardo Boff once said, "The realization of one's life is not the work of reason that goes from here to there but of the gathering of the Spirit who harvests the richness of each situation. Spirit is not something at the side of the body or the highest form of reason. Spirit is the mode of our being which searches for the meaning of each thing. . . . It is the ability to be full in everything we do. This is the Spirit. Spirituality thus is to be able to live like this, God in each thing. Spirit is not science or technique but a way of living."<sup>4</sup> How is the Spirit shaping your way of living?

When I think about Pentecost, I think about *fire, ashes, and desires*.

*Fire.* Who set the fire of the Holy Spirit on that day? What kind of fire was that? Was this fire extinguished at a certain point? Is the fire still burning today? Is there something related to the burning bush today?

*Ashes.* If there was a fire, were there ashes from that fire? If so, where were the ashes of the fire of the Holy Spirit on that day? Where did they go? But if we have ashes, does it mean that what was alive has died? Aren't ashes the sign of that which was alive and is now dead? If the fire is still burning and we celebrate it at Pentecost, where are the ashes? How do we connect the fire of Pentecost with the ashes of Ash Wednesday?

*Desires.* I am set on fire at Pentecost and I wonder what my desires are at Pentecost? What are the desires that come to my heart, mind, and body when Pentecost approaches? How do I feel Pentecost in my skin? How does my skin, burning with these desires, help me identify myself, my neighbor, and my God?

The Spirit lives between orality and writing, between my ears and the *otobiography* of the people of God, between the testimonies and archives of our communities, forming a constantly evolving multiaxial ethnography of our identities. The Spirit makes me African, Asian, Hispanic, Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, and so on. By the power of the Spirit, my identity is in between my brother, my sister, myself, and God!

The Spirit does not work much through the individual alone as we often see in the United States, but rather through communitarian movements. José Comblin says that God delivers people "by means of communion and

4. Boff, *Seleção de textos espirituais*, 27.



solidarity of living communities and by means of the enthusiasm of multitudes that these communities and prophets succeed in arousing.”<sup>5</sup> Communities go from passivity to consciousness, of becoming aware of their role in history, of the exploration of their lives and land and fight for freedom and justice. In this process, the Spirit empowers people by the mutuality and presence and cooperation of neighbors, brothers, and sisters. The Spirit works in and through communities! The charisma given by the Spirit is indeed on individuals and on communities. However, the charisma of the individual only has power if offered, lived, and worked in and through a community.

Then the pastor comes down from the pulpit and asks, “What happens at Pentecost for you?” And walking around the church she waits for people to respond. She asks again, “What happens at Pentecost for you?” Then, one by one, people start to make their connections to this precious day:

“I wonder if we’ve made Pentecost a day only in our liturgical calendar rather than a season so that we don’t need to deal with this burning power of the Spirit in our lives for a long time. We celebrate it in one day so that we can go on into the ordinary/regular time of our faith/life.”<sup>6</sup>

“At Pentecost, I get afraid sometimes because there is loss and there is hope, there is desire and there is the desperation for the coming of the Spirit. However, the coming of the Spirit will disarrange my life completely. I know that much!”

“At Pentecost, I am also afraid because the Spirit in worship will make me see that what I am in relation to my brothers and sisters has to do with my money and what I do with it. I am responsible for them as they are for me.”

“I am afraid at Pentecost, because the Spirit will make me pray without ceasing, will make me say ‘Gloria’ and ‘Alleluia’ a thousand times, will make me stay with people that I do not necessarily like for a little longer, will make me forgive and offer second chances.”

“At Pentecost I will hear again that without strangers around me, without offering a place and hospitality to foreigners, I will have no way to find myself, much less God.”

“At Pentecost, the Spirit makes us drunk with love, and we can’t stop our prayer of thanksgiving. Nobody understands us and people are eager to see us get back to a ‘proper way’ of believing. There is some stupidity in following this Spirit, in listening to its strange voice. There is also a certain brokenness that is part of being taken by the Spirit, a broken body, a broken

5. Comblin, “Holy Spirit,” 146–47.

6. This idea comes from a conversation with the Reverend Ann Deibert.

Spirit in us hoping to be mended, blessed, redone, revived, resurrected. Living with the Spirit of God is like wrestling with the Angel of God in the Jabbok Valley. We cannot lose the angel from our sight and we will go all the way in our battle to receive God's blessings. This holy battle entails a mark of God in our bodies and we may end up limping. However, we can know this much: we'd rather limp because of God's touch on us than walk straight without God's presence. Pentecost is to be marked by God forever."

"Pentecost is the time when we remember that to know God now is to know God forever."

"At Pentecost I lose all of my words and have to learn how to pray all over again."

"Pentecost is about talking about Jesus and all the time asking people, 'Have you heard of this Jesus Christ? I don't know what happened to me but I know I was transformed by this Jesus Christ and I must follow him now. Do you want to join me?'"

"Pentecost reminds us that church is the people of God and not endowments or market profits. As a matter of fact, Pentecost is about never having any savings or money in the market or in any bank account until all people are able to eat at least three meals a day."

"Pentecost is about equality of pastors' salaries: from those who deal with presidents of countries to those who 'only' baptize children in a far-away community. Ministry is about a call and not about a salary package! Every pastor should be cared for with decency and honor! *Everyone!*"

"Pentecost is about nobody receiving more than anybody else!"

"Pentecost is about a light shed on the shadows of society, illuminating those societies placed in invisible places!"

"Pentecost is about the healing of ourselves, the healing of our queer families, the healing of our communities, and the healing of the nations."

"Pentecost is about caring for God's creation."

"Pentecost is more; it is about restoring honor and respect to the earth and putting limits on ourselves!"

After the people have spoken, the pastor then says, "Pentecost is about remembering the least of these and all of the communities that are being destroyed by national and international capitalist companies. Pentecost is about God's deep care for the least of these, for subjugated and exploited people. Pentecost is about seeing life coming out of those we don't consider. Pentecost is about people gaining strength to not only survive but stand in the midst of all of the agents of death. Indigenous people, gypsies, non-documented and forgotten communities, and all of the poor communities kept excluded. At Pentecost, we renew our trust that all of them will gain new strength when the Spirit is poured out over them. Monseñor Leonidas

Proaño exemplifies this when he talks about the native people: "We native people started to open our eyes and see, we started to loosen up and articulate our tongues, we started to recuperate our word, we started to speak with courage, we started to put ourselves on our feet, we started to walk, we started to organize ourselves, and start actions that could be transformed into actions of transcendental importance to us."<sup>7</sup>

And the people continue to respond:

"Pentecost is about learning new songs and new prayers and new liturgical practices."

"Pentecost is about being able to go beyond our one-hour worship services. As a matter of fact, Pentecost is about not being slaves of time."

"Pentecost is about eating the Eucharist every single day and consequently every Sunday!"

"Pentecost is about washing our mouths in the morning before we say the name of God. Pentecost is about washing our faces in the morning and thanking God for the miracle of life."

"Pentecost is about never ever taking this life for granted."

"Pentecost is about asking for God's mercies endlessly. *Kyrie eleison* every day!"

"Pentecost is about always looking after the poor."

The pastor says again, "Yes! Pentecost is about praying and fighting for a new world. Leonardo Boff says, 'The Holy Spirit was poured over everybody. The Spirit lives in the hearts of people, giving them enthusiasm, courage and determination. The Spirit consoles the afflicted, keeps utopias alive in human minds and in the social imagination, a utopia of a humanity completely redeemed, and gives strength to anticipate them using revolutions within history.'"<sup>8</sup>

An older woman responds, "Pentecost teaches us to end the day asking not, 'How did I do today?' but rather 'How did I bless somebody today?' or 'To whom was I a blessing today?'"

And her husband responds, "Pentecost teaches us to end our worship services not asking, 'Was I blessed today?' but rather 'Were any of my brothers and sisters blessed today?'"

And the people continue to respond:

"Pentecost is about living with our 'enemies,' even when they want to build a temple for their God near us."

"Pentecost is about bending our back and becoming humble."

"Pentecost is about weakness and not power."

7. As quoted in Hernandez, "Deus, tradições indígenas and globalization," 305.

8. Boff, *Seleção de textos espirituais*, 29.

"Pentecost is about fire, a burning fire."

"Pentecost is giving and accepting forgiveness."

"Pentecost is about believing that God is finding a way out of no way in our lives."

"Pentecost is a time when God makes nobody into somebody."

"Pentecost is about a father asking a son, 'How can we mend this relationship?' Or a mother who sees her son going to war and who, even though she does not support the war, prays ceaselessly for his well-being."

"Pentecost is about two lovers finding a way to love each other."

"Pentecost is not necessarily what we expect, what we believe, what we hope, and definitely not what we can do, but what it is that God can do in and through us."

"Pentecost is about shouting, 'The racist incarceration system that destroys our communities will go down!'"

"Pentecost is about shouting, 'We ain't gonna be evicted from our homes! All of us have the right to shelter!'"

There is silence in the congregation.

The pastor then walks toward the Eucharistic table and we are all pondering these powerful connections, not agreeing with everything that was said but wondering about what this powerful feast of Pentecost means in our lives today. We all feel we are ready to partake in the feast of Jesus Christ!

### **We Respond with a Global Prayer**

Brothers and sisters from different nationalities affirm the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the world in their own languages. A cacophony of voices and languages fills the air and stretches our minds to think about Mexico, Palestine, India, Pakistan, Bolivia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Honduras, and Mexico and back to our very neighborhoods where people from all over the world live.

### **We Pray the Prayer of Thanksgiving**

It is at Pentecost, around the baptismal font and this global Eucharistic table, that we gain perspective on how God has manifested God's glory and love deeply in the world's history and in our own history promising time after time that life is stronger than death. This is the table of God for the entire world. Here at this table, we always celebrate Pentecost. Every Sunday! For at this table we always have present the Holy Spirit, the presence of the earth in its food, and the thanksgiving of our hearts.

One says, "God be with you."

Many say, "And also with you."

One says, "Lift up your hearts."

Many say, "We lift them up to God."

One says, "Let us give thanks to God our Creator."

Many say, "It is right to give God thanks and praise."

Let us now gather around the table and say how this table has shaped the way we understand the work and the movement of the Holy Spirit in each one of us, in our families, in churches, and around the world. Let us try to connect what we said during the collective sermon and these three things: earth, thanksgiving, and the Holy Spirit.

We all talk in small groups, and the mixture of voices and laughter takes over the sanctuary. After a while the pastor gathers us back together again and says, "Sisters and brothers, it is the Holy Spirit who helps us proclaim our faith and hope."

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

We are then invited to pray for each other and for the world.

One says, "Friends, when we pray for each other we reassure each other that we are not alone, that God lives with us through the Spirit and we are God's presence to one another. Let us pray for those people and situations that are in need of an extra portion of the Holy Spirit today." We all raise our prayers and pray for each other. Then somebody starts the Lord's Prayer.

The dancers start to dance around the table and with the sound of music they dance and pray for the Holy Spirit to bless the food, and each one of us, and the world. After each phrase they repeat, "Come Holy Spirit, come and renew all your creation."

The words of institution are repeated in many languages and the bread is broken and the wine poured into the cup. There is plenty for all. And more food around the table that makes the oldest woman in the church announce, "Here nobody goes hungry!"

We are all invited:

Come, all of you, for the gifts of the Holy Spirit for you are ready.

The gifts of God for the people of God!

Dance and music resume and we start to share food over a huge table that has several breads, and wine, and juice, and fruits, humus, salsa, cheese, crackers, and cookies, and flowers, honey, and milk. There is food for all

reminding us that this table is truly a feast, the feast of God, and the Spirit always provides for all when we share and give our lives to God and to others. After the feast, we pray,

We thank you, O God, for at this table you console us and confront our ways of living. At this table you challenge us to shift our paradigms and find new understandings and practices. At this table you teach us to turn and be turned, to move and be moved, to transform and be transformed, to lose and be lost, to find and be found. God of our lives, at this table you teach us to unlearn what keeps us away from each other and learn hard lessons of where to go to find our neighbor. At this table, you release us from our fears of sharing, and undo our feelings of the scarcity of goodness and mercy, and help us to offer instead hearts filled with generosity to our neighbors. May your Holy Spirit continue to work on us until you come back to us again. Amen.

We go to our seats and now we are challenged to give our money. We are reminded that to give is better than to receive and that to give is essential to our faith. We are reminded that by our offering the mission of the church of Jesus Christ can continue and many people in our community, as well as abroad, benefit from our offering of faith.

The choir sings "I'll Fly Away" and the dancers dance with the offering plates. After the money is collected the money is prayed over and the choir continues to sing.

### **We Are Sent Forth by the Power of the Spirit**

As the choir hums "I'll Fly Away," the pastor sends us forth, saying, "Brothers and sisters, the Spirit is here, has always been here, will always be here! Inside us and around us and through us and all over the world. We are all filled with the Spirit to live better and fully! To care for the poor! We are empowered to forgive, to revisit our history, to critically think about our present and dream dreams for a future of peace, justice, and goodness. Go to the world and witness to the power and glory of Jesus Christ. Share what you have, care for the earth, welcome the stranger, love all those who cross your path and love your God with all your heart, mind, and body. For God is about to get us all drunk, get prepared! In the name of God who came, comes, and will come again, God the mother, father, sibling, God the creator, the redeemer, the consoler, God the earth, air, fire and wind! Amen!"



After the benediction, the choir continues to hum and a girl leads the church outside the doors carrying a white dove. As she gets to the door, she lets the dove fly and the whole church sings:

I'll fly away, O Glory

I'll fly away;

When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,

I'll fly away.