*John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15*

*26 ‘When the Advocate**\** *comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf.27You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.*

*‘I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.5But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?”6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.7Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate**\** *will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.8And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about**\** *sin and righteousness and judgement:9about sin, because they do not believe in me;10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;11about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.*

*12 ‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

*Growing in the Spirit*

*There’s something about water that has always attracted me. I don’t mean drinking water; I mean big quantities of water. Who here loves to swim? I don’t know if my attraction to water is unusually strong, but so many of my earliest, fondest memories relate to swimming. I still remember, from my early childhood, water toys that I had – boats and submarines. I remember swimming in a salt water pool in Virginia when our family was on vacation. I remember my first time water skiing – I must have been three or four years old, and I held my father’s arms as he held the rope that pulled us both up on the skis. As a young boy I spent as much of my summers as possible around a pool, and my first time I ventured off the high diving board. Whenever I visited a beach I would venture further and further out to sea, and by time I was in my teens I was learning to body surf. Whenever there was a strong surf, the kind that made lifeguards edgy, I would be making them edgier by swimming out to the whistle line. I learned to sail and canoe and scuba dive. Over a course of about fifteen years I went from bathtub to blue ocean, from making waves to riding waves (and sometimes eating sand in the process). I still get excited when I think about going to a beach, especially if the surf is high. I want to feel the surf pulling and pushing me even as I leave the beach.*

*I think we all have something that excites us – some people really get into photography or poetry or music or cooking or baseball, some hobby that thrills us and pulls us in. It takes just a little prompting to start this fire burning within us – getting a brownie camera, seeing a concert, throwing your first softball softball, making a grilled cheese sandwich – and grows gradually until someday you have your own studio or business or you publish a book or you become a member of a team or just make your passion your hobby*. You may never be a professional whatever, but that doesn’t matter because you just feel that joy and excitement from doing whatever it is, and you just keep getting better at it because you’re on automatic pilot – you love doing it so you do it more and more!

I wonder how many people equate this kind of passion with spirituality. We usually think of someone who is “spiritual” as someone who spends a lot of time doing *none* of the things I’ve described, who lives in a monastery, reads the Bible and prays in Latin. “Spiritual” people may be cheerful and joyful, but we don’t imagine them yelling “yahoo” as they fly down fly off a cliff on a hang glider. That’s what “spirited” people do. Someone who is spirited is someone who shows little constraint, someone can make you feel a little nervous because you’re not sure about what they’ll do next, while someone who is spiritual doesn’t worry you at all. Teachers writing comments on report cards might inform parents that their child who likes to set off fire alarms and spray other kids at the water fountain as one who is “spirited.” A “spiritual” child, one who prays while the other kids are running around the playground, who reads the Bible during study hall, you might consider referring to the school psychologist. The spirited child is more or less normal, but a spiritual child is one that you might have concerns over.

So when you meet an adult who identifies him or herself as “spiritual,” or who acts in ways that you might call “spiritual,” do you not have the same concerns? Are we supposed to grow up into something less “spirited” and more “spiritual”?

I don’t think so. I think it’s a shame that we have distorted the idea of what “spirituality” is all about. Part of the fault lies in the way Christians have been taught to think. We divide things into physical and spiritual. This notion came from a philosophy called Neoplatonism based on the writings of Plato who believed that the physical world was not true reality and that all truth and beauty and goodness lay in the non-physical or *spiritual* world. When some people in the church embraced this notion, it manifested itself in horrible ways; monks beat themselves up because of their “evil” bodily passions. Some refused to worship with music or dance. Some just mentally retreated from the world, praying that God would take them away to heaven.

Such belief is still found today in bits and pieces. There are plenty of Christians who are “have their head in the clouds” so to speak. But such a belief is not what the Bible teaches us. When Jesus says that we are not “of” the world he’s saying that as Christians, as new beings in Christ, we are not subject to the fears and desires that lead us away from God. But there is nothing about swimming or dancing or singing or playing rock & roll that necessarily leads us away from God. I’m reminded of the time that King David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, and he was so happy that he dancing in his underwear (2 Samuel 6:14)! His wife was very upset with him, but David explained that he was dancing “before the Lord” Singing and playing and dancing in your underwear can all be forms of worship to God; all these activities can be profoundly *spiritual.*

“Spirituality” comes from the Hebrew word *חַי* meaning *life.* To be spiritual is to be *lively* or spirited, and being spirited involves more than the mind; it involves the body as well. It involves the hands and arms and legs and voice. It involves euphoria that shows up in our actions as well as our feelings. On the day of Pentecost, when all those people came pouring out of that small room in Jerusalem, witnesses said that they looked and acted drunk! Were they drunk? Not at all, according to Peter – it was a little too early in the day. They were in a sense punch drunk because they had been punched by the Holy Spirit and they were a little wacky, like the kid who runs down the hall in school laughing hysterically. They were giddy! They were touched by the Holy Spirit and they were acting a bit peculiar. They didn’t come out of the room doing Gregorian chants and their eyes closed; they were coming out like they were on fire! Why? because the Holy Spirit had given them this passion to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It was exciting news that they could not keep to themselves, and so it burst out of them, and people saw it and believed it and got excited about it.

How often do we stifle the Holy Spirit? How often do we curb our excitement? Do we get a little nervous or scared when people in the church get a little too excited? Does euphoria in church seem like an oxymoron? When you enter a church and see everybody raising their hands do you think that the pastor is pointing a loaded weapon? Maybe we need to remind ourselves that being spiritual is being spirited! Jumping up and down can be a deeply spiritual activity. Having a hotdog eating contest with your daughter can be a deep spiritual activity. Prayer is good. Bible study is good. Listening quietly to a sermon is good…though I’d be encouraged by hearing an occasional “amen,” amen? All these “spiritual” disciplines can certainly help build your relationship with God. But so can sailing or cooking or dancing. All this can be done in a “spirit” of celebration and thankfulness.

Stifling the Holy Spirit can be like always swimming in the kiddie pool when you could be diving off the high board. It’s like sitting on the beach when you could be riding the waves. In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus tells his disciples of all the things that “will” happen when the Holy Spirit comes. He tells them that there are some things that he hasn’t yet told them because they weren’t ready to ride the waves, but he sent the Spirit and pretty soon the disciples were surfing – hang five dude! They did not go reluctantly into the world to proclaim Jesus resurrected; they grabbed their boards and hit the water, led by the Holy Spirit who showed them that no wave was too big.

Christ promised that same Spirit to us. Granted we may not be ready to surf the minute we receive that Spirit – we may need to start off in the shallow end before we can dive off the high diving board. We may need to swim close to the beach before we venture out to that place where the big waves are breaking. But the growing process is exciting, and we should joyfully anticipate the time when we will be able to ride those waves.

So if you had this notion that being spiritual is somehow confining, get over it. On this day of Pentecost, I want you to celebrate the Holy Spirit that doesn’t tell you to spend all of your time in your room reading your Bible but sends you out, into the streets, proclaiming the good news of Jesus with your entire being! Think of your spirituality as something that is active, action-filled. Digging a well to help bring water to a thirsty community is *being spiritual.* Serving dinner to folks is *being spiritual.* Tossing your baby a foot in the air is *being spiritual…*provided you catch her. Dancing, singing, swimming, skiing, all those ways that you celebrate the body that God has given you, is *being spiritual* when you do it in a spirit of worship and celebration.

May the Holy Spirit fill you with the joy that comes from knowing God’s love and salvation. May that same spirit inspire you to an exciting life in Christ.