

Traveling across our state you encounter a great number of giant wind turbines for the generation of electricity. According to recent news reports, our state leads the nation in the amount of electricity for commercial and home use generated through wind energy. These giant turbines always puts me in mind of Pentecost. They symbolize the mystery and dynamic of Christian and Church life we celebrate today.

The State of Iowa, is place where wind is almost continually blowing; a soft gentle breeze or, unfortunately at times, a fierce gale or tornadic strength. These experiences can help us understand the person and activity of the Holy Spirit, the “ruah”/breath of God. The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit as the life-breath blowing over the void, of God’s creative word bringing all of creation into being, of the life-breath God through which we human beings fashioned in the divine image and likeness rise and live. It is a mighty wind that parts the waters of the Red Sea allowing the Hebrew people to pass through on dry ground to the land of freedom in the Exodus. It is the still, gentle breeze on Mt. Carmel from which the prophet Elijah hides his face as he encounters God. It is this same ruah/breath/wind that flows from Jesus upon the apostles gathered in the Upper Room on Easter night, the tornadic gale that shakes the house where the apostles and Mary have gathered on Pentecost morning. It is the breath/wind of God that continues to move over the world.

Atop the giant turbines sits a generator that signals the giant blades to begin rotating. This generator must be activated by an electrical source (fire) in order to produce its desired effect. So, too, through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, God’s Holy Spirit activates those who receive them with the energy, the fire of his love.

As the blades of the turbines rotate they produce energy. Set in motion by the generator, the blades translate the wind into concrete energy which benefits those who receive it. In this, the blades are subject to a governor in the generator which regulates their speed so that they do not spin wildly out of control. At times the blades move ever so slowly. At other times they move more rapidly. But at all times they are governed so that they produce their effect. And, yes, at some times the blades necessarily are not moving, are taken off the grid, are silent, until their gift is called for again.

St. Paul in the second reading reminds us that each of us has been given a particular gift, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit to be used for the good of the Church and the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God calls forth and regulates that, or those, gifts. At times, too, God calls us to restful silence as he re-energizes us until he once again empowers us to “come on line” with our gift for the sake of his kingdom.

Like all analogies, this one too, is limited. While the wind is a free agent, the turbine is not. It is subject to human control. We, on the other hand, though we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have also been given the gift of freedom by God in our creation and baptism. We can choose or refuse to allow the fire of God’s Holy Spirit ruah/breath/wind to energize us, and in turn, to deliver his energy to the world or we can choose to go off grid temporarily or permanently. Pentecost is our annual celebration not only of renewing God’s gift of the Holy Spirit given, but a time to examine ourselves as to how we are allowing that energy to direct our lives and through us bring the energy and life of God to others and the wider world.

Soon our parish will be embarking on a process to help all of us “turn on” the switch of the Holy Spirit given us and share that energy through our partnering with an organization known as “Evangelical Catholic.” Don’t be scared. Evangelical Catholic is *not* about turning all of us into a one-million-megawat-fire-breathing-Bible-thumping-street-corner-or-door-to-door missionary zealot! What Evangelical Catholic *is* about is inviting us to open ourselves to a deeper relationship with Jesus, sharing that relationship through building up each other in small faith groups, energizing ourselves, each other, and our parish in our mission as Jesus’ disciples. I hope all of us will accept this invitation to ignite or re-ignite the fire of the Holy Spirit within us moving the “blades” of our life to energize others.

*“Breathe on me, Breath of God /fill me with fire anew/ that I may love what thou dost love/ and do what thou wouldst do.”*

Fr Jim Secora