

This Sunday we can begin to see light in the darkness of these many days of isolation, breathless sickness and even death.

As the light begins to shine we cannot help but mourn over 100,000 who have “lost their breath” and died throughout our country including seventeen Montanans from this deadly disease.

The days have indeed been dark, but there is a flame of hopeful light beginning to emerge. That light is revealing new ways of acting, living and believing. The fire of the Holy Spirit falls upon us, not as we might want, but in ways we do not expect.

It is a light revealing continuing care, a flame of action for the sake of others, a fire of memory with a burning desire to serve and live for the sake of others.

It is a blaze that lets us see with clearer eyes challenging days yet to come. The different gifts, the many languages, the diversity of the human family is revealed by this spirited fire as both a need and necessary gift-a gift and truth we cannot live without.

The light though is challenging, as the darkness still surrounds it, because it reveals the continued pandemic of hatred, division and fiery violence so real all around us, demonstrated these days in Minneapolis and many other cities.

The light of the Spirit, enflamed in many ways, reveals the dark evil of racism still at large among us all. It shows and reveals the sounds of the many languages crying for help, compassion, justice and mercy.

The burning light in the dark waits to consume hate, division, violence. It burns away our deaf ears and reveals the untruths and lies on which too many so often depend.

The flaming light of the Spirit in the darkness of these days lights the way that must be followed to truth, justice, human dignity and the right to live and “to breathe” without fear.

The “tongues of fire” are real when we all can finally hear the breathless cries of others and another as if the faintest sounds were coming from our own mouths and the depth of our own hearts; hearing the cries in such a way as to feel our own breath being choked out.

The breath of this fiery Holy Spirit is a breath which gives life—a breath like a “strong driving wind:” the breath of life which cannot be extinguished.

Finally, the flame of the Holy Spirit burning in the darkness reveals the ultimate truth of God, that though the human family is diverse and made of many different persons, colors and ways of life, we are all one, all given to drink of the one Spirit, all into whom God has breathed the breath of life which no one has a right to smother. To deny that truth is a sin—a sin “retained,” unforgiven, until hearts are changed and human beings are freed.

So, during these days, and on this day, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”*

TOGETHER, BREATHE IN THE HOLY BREATH OF GOD: THEN WE WILL ALL LIVE AS ONE.

