

Pentecost 2017
June 3-4
Frazee/Callaway

I begin with a description of the Blessed Trinity by Bishop Robert Barron: "From all eternity, the Father looks at the Son and the Son looks at the Father. What each sees is utter perfection and beauty. And so each, as Venerable Fulton Sheen said, sighs his love for the other. This shared breath is what our tradition calls the *Spiritus Sanctus*, the love breathed back and forth between the Father and the Son.

"This is the same Holy Spirit that hovered over the chaotic waters at creation, that spoke through the prophets and patriarchs, that overshadowed the Virgin at the Annunciation, that drove Jesus into the desert, and that the Lord breathed (appropriately enough) on his disciples the night of Easter. How marvelous that this sacred breath is associated with the forgiveness of sins: *Receive the Holy Spirit, Jesus said. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.*

"In an acrobatic act of love, the Father sent the Son all the way to the limits of godforsakenness, all the way to the furthest end of our rebellion and isolation. This is the central drama of the cross. Then, in the Holy Spirit, he drew the whole fallen world, which the Son had embraced, back to himself. And this is precisely why the Spirit is the great principle of mercy. In the words of absolution, the priest prays, "God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins."

"On the feast of Pentecost, we celebrate the fact that this breath, this wind, the hurricane of mercy has been loosed upon the world." (Magnificat, June 2017, pg. 67)

A retired and now deceased priest of the Diocese of Fargo moved to New York City for his retirement. He lived in subsidized housing amid thousands of people in poverty. He explained, "I am commanded to love my neighbor as myself. In order to increase the odds of success, I want to live with a lot of people!" In New York City on a bench in Central Park, Fr. Hovda was an image of the breath of God. In the midst of poverty, violence and vulnerability, he was the mercy of God for the world.

When we gaze at those near us, we seldom see perfection. At its best, we see people striving for holiness but failing daily. At its worst, we see people who have given up on themselves and on the world and have given in to the folly of sin, who have entered godforsakenness and do not want to come out.

On June, 3, the Church celebrated the martyrdom of St. Charles Lwanga and twenty one others executed between the years 1885 and 1887 in Uganda. "The missionary efforts of the Shite Fathers had converted a number of young men and boys at the court of the tribal lord Mwangwa. In the habit of seducing his young male pages, Mwangwa found himself suddenly thwarted by

their newfound chastity. In a moment of rage, he ordered them to renounce their faith or face execution. On June 3, Charles and seventeen companions, along with some Anglican converts, were burned to death. 'A well which has many sources never runs dry. When we are gone, others will come after us,' one of them predicted. By 1890, there were some 10,000 Christian converts in Southern Uganda" (Magnificat, June 2017, pgs 50-51)

The young Christian men looked at King Mwanga and said, "We don't breathe your air anymore. We are filled with the Holy Spirit, we breathe the wind of divine love."

Christians in Uganda and an old priest in New York were conduits of *the hurricane of mercy God has loosed upon the world*. If you seek to live in the Holy Spirit, you must look upon those who are near you with the eyes of faith: forgive their sins, love them expecting nothing in return and repent of your own sins. This is what we do.