

Here's a doll. I'm going to breathe into it. Nothing happens. But at the beginning, the Hebrew Scriptures say God made a doll out of clay, and breathed into it his breath of life ... and the doll opened its eyes and became a human being. God has a powerful breath!

In today's Gospel, the apostles are locked in a room. They have the wind knocked out of them. They are, spiritually, barely breathing ... maybe even dead. And Jesus comes ... and breathes on them ... with what must be the same all powerful breath of God. Because ... they all got their second wind. They came to life. They were given power to be at peace, and go out and spread forgiveness and reconciliation.

And finally, in the first reading ... they, the believers, were all at one place together, closed in on themselves once again. God decided they needed to start breathing again. And God bent, on the Pentecost harvest festival day that was the harvest for what Jesus had planted, God bent down and breathed into that church that wasn't a church, with such a violent blow of driving air, the whole house shook.

They all got filled with the Holy Spirit!

Holy Spirit is Holy Breath. In the bible, the literal translation of Holy Spirit is Holy Breath.

Time after time when the church stops breathing spiritually, has the breath knocked out, looks dead, shows no signs of spiritual life ... in comes the Holy Breathe. A saint makes everyone sigh with a new dream. An ecumenical council lets in fresh air. A cat may have 9 lives; the Catholic Church has so far has had at least 9 million and 9 lives. Great minds have written obituaries of our Church, only to discard them later with red faces.

It happens --- the coming of the Holy Breath --- to the individual members of the Church as well. Have you every been knocked out spiritually, dull, non-practicing . . . only to be visited by odd experiences, strange longings, odd coincidences, some person, some dream ... and if you not being willingly dumb, busy, and distracted ... you feel the Holy Spirit making you breathe again..

This is our birthday. The day we started breathing. It is a birthday that keeps repeating itself as our sins make us die and the Holy Spirit comes to revive us.

Blow here, fiery breath of God. When we get too high and mighty, sanctimonious even, flash our sins on the news, and drag us into the mud so we can be honest, humble and holy again. When we get too orderly, too precious, sneak into all the offices and blow the papers right out the window. And when we're too disorderly, too loose, maybe not even connected with Christ, then blow us back on track, straighten lines that are crooked, reduce hearts to the truth and the Gospel.

But why even ask for you to come, Holy Breathe? You are bound to, invited or not, because God loves the Church Jesus died to make. It is, after all, his Son's own body. God will breathe and blow and blast until we're alive in heaven. Happy happy Pentecost!