

A wise story from Ghana says three women dearly wanted children, but it wasn't happening. Finally near despair they went to the local medicine man. "Yes, you can be helped with this. But you need to think carefully, because there's a condition attached. On the day you give birth ... you will go mad." Well this was certainly something to think about, and they did. When they returned three days later, two of the three still wanted a child. But the third said, "If having a baby will make me go mad, I want nothing to do with it."

So the two received their treatment, and sure enough ... within a year they both had beautiful babies. They were so happy. They also waited to go mad, but nothing happened. They went back to see the medicine man and ask why. He put them off until finally the babies woke and cried, and there were those women on their feet, rocking back and forth, dancing, humming singing and saying the Ghanese equivalent of "Kootchy-kootchy-koo."

At which the medicine man slapped his side and broke into a high laughter. "Do you see, daughters," he said. "During the months you were large and sick with these little parasites, your choice bordered on madness. Then you put up with hours of excruciating pain. And now you make fools of yourselves in front of me, rocking, dancing, jerking, uttering strange meaningless words in high incantation. You give up sleep at night. You nurse, and clean up ugly things with no pay. You will end up working hours and hours, worse than a slave, and usually receive no thanks. You have truly gone mad!"  
(story from Dynamic Preaching XXIII, pp. 40-41)

And they all laughed together. Because there is a certain madness, craziness, that comes when you're besides yourself with love ... and it is often painful and inconvenient ... and a complete waste to someone who doesn't know love ... but to you ... it's what you were made for and you wouldn't trade it for anything.

Do you see that the apostles, and generation upon generation of holy people from the first Pentecost right up to our own time, are acting in exactly the same way as these mothers? They had a choice between falling in love with God, giving birth to the Church, or not. And perhaps many sensible people decided, no, I don't want to go mad. I don't want to have others seeing me saying kootchy-koo to God or God's poor, I don't want to be caught up in holy joys that will make me seem unsophisticated, touched. I don't want to spend my time, money talent on tasks for which I often get no thanks, no promotion, no special notice. But there are always others who let God's spirit carry them away. They say: This is what we were made for! Jesus is Lord! I don't care if I look drunk or not.

A week from Monday we have our annual parish mission. It is a time for coming together, three nights, and letting ourselves fall more deeply in love with God. It will be a time for feeling the divine Spirit embracing us, and singing kootchy-koo to God. We'll hear witness talks from fellow parishioners, eat good food, sing and listen to a great presenter, a deacon from Sacramento. *It will be a time to give in a little more to this divine madness we were made for, and surrender ourselves to a better more holy Spirit.*

I hope you will all come. And ... I hope you bring someone with you. We're all called to share this wonderful faith God calls us to. You noticed, didn't you, that the first gifts of the Spirit was wind ... breath ... and a tongue on fire. It's no good to be holy and just leave it to others to guess why you're happy, why you don't let things defeat you, why you forgive enemies. You were given a tongue to invite others to Jesus.

In that Spirit, the Holy Spirit, I'm asking every adult parishioners to take at least three parish mission invitation tickets home with you. Give them, along with your own personal spoken-with-your-tongue invitation, to unchurched or non-practicing Catholics you know ... maybe your family, friend, neighbor. Consider offering to come with them.

What you are inviting people to is something, someone, who is joy-giving and life-changing. If you don't think love can do that, in particular divine love given in Jesus, but love also going out to others ... if you don't think love can do that ... go ask any mother.