

One-thousand nine-hundred eighty-six liturgical years ago today, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples gathered in Jerusalem, infusing them with the same gifts given 24 teens and 2 adults last weekend as Archbishop J. Peter Sartain celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation for our parish communities. Through these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit – **Wisdom, Knowledge, Counsel, Fortitude, Understanding, Fear of the Lord, Piety** – God continues to lead, strengthen and embolden the Church to live its mission of discipleship and evangelization. As Christ’s mystical body here on earth, the Church is both holy and in need of sanctification. We read about this in the Acts of the Apostles and the New Testament Epistles – we read and know this in our daily lives today. That first Pentecost, the “birthday” of the Church, God breathed his Spirit upon the disciples so that the roots of the growing Church community would have the fullness of life – *His Life* – itself as nourishment.

Roots are important. When I was ten, my mother encountered Jesus profoundly during a retreat led by Jean Vanier, introducing our family to the international federation of L’Arche communities which has remained a significant part of my life and formation, even bringing me to Tacoma. Over the decades I have been blessed to have lived-in and known many communities, as well as being able to have spoken with, visited and corresponded with Jean, the founder of L’Arche, himself. A faithful Catholic, Vanier recently passed away (May 7, 2019), but not before sharing much of his heart through reflections and writings. Many of you have your own experiences of L’Arche and/or the writings of Jean Vanier.

One of the burning questions for Jean that led him to leave his life of prestige and glory for a life of complex simplicity found in living community with persons with and without disabilities, centered around “living the beatitudes.” *How does one “live” the beatitudes?* Jean’s question became my question – and I hope it becomes yours too, for the depths of faithful obedience to which we are called to plunge as disciples of Jesus are typically avoided as we stay “safe” in the comfortable shallows. Much is learned in community – revealing both the gift and wound within oneself and others. I have been part of some of the first L’Arche communities established, helped start another one, and witnessed the closing of yet another. How a community starts, matters: and if there is a wound, its effects can be felt decades later if it is not attended to and healed.

What is true in L’Arche communities is true of families, nations and even parishes. We are all in need of roots and nourishment: we all have areas of deep gift and are in need of intense healing. Let us ask God again to “refuel” our lives with the gifts of his Spirit. As Archbishop Sartain reminded us last week, God does not give in half-measures, but in full abundance: the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit given us in Confirmation are available to us *every day!* Are we asking, ready to receive them?

In the Joy of the Risen Christ,

*Kristen Abbananto*

Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation  
Visitation and Holy Rosary Parishes, Tacoma WA  
Archdiocese of Seattle

