



# First United Church of Oak Park

## Confirmation, not Graduation

Acts 2:1-8, 12-18

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I have a riddle for you, let's see if you can figure this out... what is something that is considered powerful but unable to be seen, it surrounds all things and is also within all life forms. It is also what connects and binds them together.

Raise your hand if you thought of atoms; what about the Holy Spirit? Now, raise your hand if you thought of The Force. As in, "May The Force be with you," from Star Wars.

In Quest this year, one of the biggest topics we talked about and continually came back to was the Holy Spirit and often when we talked about the Holy Spirit we made connections to how it is not unlike The Force in the Star Wars universe. The reason we kept coming back to the Holy Spirit in Quest is because it is the most difficult piece of the Trinity and probably our lives of faith to understand, to grasp, or define.

How many of you can easily explain what the Holy Spirit is? Have you ever tried? One of the things we asked these Quest students to do this year during our unit on the Holy Spirit was to put onto paper what the Holy Spirit looked like to them. So, if I handed you a piece of paper and something to write with and asked you to draw the Holy Spirit, could you?

My hope is that you would be able to put something on that piece of paper, but I can guarantee you that what you put on that piece of paper would be unique from what anyone else might put on their piece of paper. Because everyone experiences and understands the Holy Spirit in a different way. By drawing parallels between the Holy Spirit and The Force, as a class, we were able to give words to something that otherwise left us confused.

Therefore, over the last week as I have tried to figure out what this sermon should be, I thought about this concept in relation to our scripture for today. Today is Pentecost and today is Confirmation Sunday. Which of these should I focus on? Can I fit both in? How might these two things relate to one another?

In our scripture reading for today, I find that these two occasions of Pentecost and Confirmation do go hand in hand. Our scripture says, "they were filled with the holy spirit and began to speak in other languages...they were mystified because everyone heard them speaking their native languages." In this way, Pentecost is a day of understanding and unity. All people of different backgrounds, circumstances, and languages were able to understand one another and were brought together by their understanding. They were united and connected by the Holy Spirit that surrounded them and was within each of them.

When you consider the similarities between the Holy Spirit and the Force, you can see the role it plays in unity. In the passage, it is the Spirit that connects these people and allows them to understand one another. In this Bible story, the community gathered together was united with one another just as today we unite these confirmands with this congregation. And I believe it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we have been brought together, today, for this occasion.

As the scripture also states, “I will pour out my Holy Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams. Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”

Each one of these young people has a flame of fire alighting them. The Holy Spirit has been poured out on them; each one of them has been called as a disciple. Now, that sounds daunting and like a lot of pressure, but I want each of you to know that you shouldn't let this freak you out!

We have talked about what it means to be a disciple. It does not mean being perfect; we all make mistakes. It does not mean always having the right answer or knowing what to do all the time. Being a disciple means being open to figuring it out; it means asking questions; it means sometimes being a leader and sometimes being a follower; it means being a part of a community and doing your part to serve your community.

It has been my honor and privilege to work with this remarkable group of young people in Quest. And today, we celebrate that they have chosen to become members of this church and desire to be disciples of Jesus Christ. But today is not a graduation day, because this is not the end; it is a beginning. Quest has been just one chapter of the life-long faith journeys you have embarked on. Or as Obi Won Kanobi would say, “You have taken your first step into a larger world.”

I have enjoyed watching you begin the shift from a second-hand faith to a first-hand faith. It is up to you to decide what you believe, what things you doubt; and it is up to you to ask questions. I encourage you to ask your questions! That is what will make you a valuable member of this community of faith and the wider world.

You are still figuring out what you believe and who you are called to be, and what it looks like to be a disciple in the world today. But take comfort in knowing that you will never have to figure that out alone. You will continue to be cared for and supported by this community. So, may God bless each of you on your journey and may the Force be with... I mean, may the Holy Spirit be with you always.

Amen.