

*Big wind's a-coming / Listen to the humming / Hurry up now, be quick, don't stall // You know we can't be slow / Take the kids and get below / If we don't hurry it'll surely get us all.*

Don't know who wrote that but it's a nice lead in to the terminus of our liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter – i.e. to Pentecost Sunday – the blowout of the Holy Spirit presented in chapter 2 of the *Acts of the Apostles*. That's the New Testament book that follows the four Gospels. Tradition has it as written by a man named Luke well toward the end of the first century – around 90 AD – a good sixty some years after the crucifixion of Jesus – and the timid withdrawal of his close followers to a locked room in Jerusalem.

From Luke's vantage point in time he could view that change among those disciples by the later decades of the century – from timid to a tidal wave of enthusiasm that had established an ever increasing number of members – mostly Gentile by then. It had also spread, thanks to Roman highways and access to all the shores of the Mediterranean's circuit. It had also become an ever more complex "system", hierarchical, ritualized, philosophical, codified, even centralized – ultimately the "Roman" Church of subsequent centuries - to what would become the official Church of the very Empire that tried to suppress it.

Actually his presentation focuses on the two early leaders Peter and Paul who got the ball rolling – and while full of historical detail his presentation gets dramatic – like any film maker "telling" a story. Pentecost is a good example of such dramatization. It's made to occur only fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. The disciples and their limited company undergo a radical spiritual change. Like that old Gene Krupa hit *Big Noise from Winnetka*, a Wind drives through their dwelling. The disciples, being mostly Jewish back then, had plenty of precedents within their Hebrew Bible to experience this wind as the Spirit, the Breath of God signaling a new age.

There is that mighty wind at the very start of the Bible that swept over the dark sea prior to God saying: *Let there be light!* and a universe emerged. There is that field of dry bones in the prophet Ezekiel over which he was told to prophesy: *From the four winds come, O breath, and breathe into those bones that they may come to life* – and the breath, this breeze, entered them and they took on flesh, became live again. And in Luke: tongues of fire, a flame crowning everyone . . . their own breath becoming articulate with love, eloquence, conversation instead of political diatribe.

Currently among us the phrase "I can't breathe" has been raised to a metaphor that aptly describes society *in general* as unable to breathe amid so much media frenzy, pandemic confusion, racial conflict, ever more demanding sales pitches popping up all over your computer screen . . . and creedal conflict. Hopefully what Luke described as Pentecost long ago – may happen again? Even though Bob Dylan, playing the prophet out of his Jewish heritage, has his doubts: *How many times must a man look up / Before he can see the sky? / Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have / Before he can hear people cry? / . . . The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind / The answer is blowin' in the wind.*

**Geoff Wood**