

How to Start a Fire

One of my favorite things to do when I go camping is making a fire. There is something so earthy yet transcendent about it and I truly believe it is an art. I have a black axe which I have named the dark knight and I love chopping wood and then making kindling. Depending on how you place the kindling in the shape of a tipi, I've noticed that they are a series of mini-crosses. Once that base has been set, the flame from the match is ready to consume the kindling and begin to create a glorious fire. Similarly, the Gospel invites us to be set afire with the love of the Spirit so that we can pass on this love to those closest to us.

Jesus exclaims, "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" You can hear the sense of longing and earnestness because he wants to send down the Holy Spirit which descended upon the apostles as tongues of fire during Pentecost. Yet the Passion must come before Pentecost because just as fire cannot start without wood, so the Holy Spirit can only come once the wood of the Cross has been first prepared. St. John Paul II writes:

[Jesus] speaks of his own "departure" through the Cross as the necessary condition for the Spirit's "coming": "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." (Dominum et vivificantem, 61)

The Holy Spirit must come after because the Holy Spirit is the one who communicates to us the divine life that Jesus won for us through his Cross and Resurrection. When Jesus died and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, how are we supposed to participate in that? E.g. Jesus on a bus to Vancouver. The Holy Spirit is like the coach driver who unites us with Jesus to participate in his journey from death to life:

Through the power of the holy spirit we take part in Christ's passion by dying to sin and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life (CCC 1988).

We participate in the passion of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, participate in that baptism, that immersion into his death and resurrection through our own baptism.

Now that we have been baptized, we have also been sanctified which means to be set apart for service to God, we have been freed from sin and enslaved to God. Jesus is radical in calling us to put him first in our lives even above our family and sometimes this can cause division. E.g. Scott Hanh and his wife. Another source of division for us could be: asking your children to go to mass. Sometimes we could be interiorly frustrated at God: "Jesus look what I am doing for you by trying to integrate faith into my family life but instead of greater peace, I am experiencing greater division and suffering."

When Jesus says that he did not come to bring peace, he was speaking of a superficial peace that comes from the world or our own efforts. He says "In me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). But this peace comes from loving Jesus first, and by doing so we maintain a peaceful heart that allows God to be present in you to love your children or others through you.

Here is an analogy to show how that works: at the Easter Vigil, the Paschal candle is lit and as a sign of our participation in his Passion, the Holy Spirit is like the flame who allows us to share in that same fire. An agitated heart is like a windy atmosphere which makes it hard to pass on the flame, but a

peaceful heart is like the calm air which allows the fire of God to be passed onto your children and others. Maintain peace in your hearts and let the Holy Spirit blaze within you for we do not know who else may catch fire.