

## **Pentecost Sunday – May 24, 2015**

Since Pentecost, with its driving wind, tongues of fire, the Spirit-filled breath of Jesus, and a promise that we are one body, literally God's gift to one another, is such an explosive feast, let's just say that Pentecost is the celebration of an ever-expanding heart and mind. So I invite you today to stretch your mind and heart enough to hear my friend's story, which she has titled "In Peals of Laughter." Here it is in her own words.

Some of my mother's funniest stories were based on real-life incidents from her childhood. One of these took place on the feast of Pentecost. She had volunteered, with other children from her Latin Rite parish, to sing in a pickup choir for Pentecost at a nearby Eastern Rite Catholic Church. In that church they had the custom of releasing a dove from the choir loft after the priest chanted, in Slovak, "Come Holy Spirit!" It was a beautiful ritual. One year, however, the gentleman who brought the dove held it under his coat too long. The dove suffocated. No sooner had he discovered this than the solemn chant began. "Come Holy Spirit!" Nothing happened. Thinking the man with the dove had missed his cue, the priest sang out again: "Come Holy Spirit!" Again, nothing. What could the poor man do? The bird was dead. A third time the priest chanted, even louder, "Come Holy Spirit!" Finally, in desperation, the man with the dove chanted back, also in Slovak: "The Holy Spirit choked himself!"

There isn't really a moral to the story. We just rolled on the floor laughing every time my mother told it.

As I think about it now, as an adult, I suspect part of the reason we found it so amusing was because the very idea that somehow we can "capture" or "release" the Holy Spirit at will is inherently funny. We may try to take control, of course, whether by preparing the perfect liturgy, creating the perfect family, pursuing the perfect career, or cultivating the perfect parish – and sometimes it seems like we've got the Spirit "in hand." But then life takes over, and comedy results. Yet all is not lost. The Holy Spirit comes unbidden, in peals of laughter, as her children remember that God is bigger than all our plans.