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## *Pentecost: From Babble To Spirit*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
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*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, ... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. - Acts 2.1-4*

I do not know many more details about that first Christian Pentecost, when the disciples heard the gospel being proclaimed in their own languages. But I know about our own Pentecost at the Cathedral of St. Philip.

When we read the gospel this past Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, suddenly a cacophony of voices erupted. From all over the Cathedral, strange languages emerged: from Mexico and South America; from Europe and Asia; from Africa. We even heard old languages that we thought were dead. It was a startling experience. Why were all these folks speaking all at once? Did something go wrong with the usually refined and well-manicured Episcopal liturgy?

No, nothing went wrong. No one was drunk either. Rather, we were experiencing, in some small way, what God visits upon the greater world every day. The holy gospel of God is proclaimed in different ways every day. Sometimes we hear that gospel in an accustomed manner; and sometimes the gospel startles us mightily!

These various languages are gifts of the Spirit. The various languages - and customs and prayers - among us are not hindrances. Unfortunately, we often think that the diversity among us is a hindrance. Why can't we all say things the same way? Why can't the Church get its act together and say one thing? All these arguments! All these controversies! It seems sometimes that the Church is one big babble.

No, the Church is not a babble. Instead, the Church is a body; the Church is a body full, absolutely chock full, of various gifts. One person preaches the gospel this way; another person acts out the gospel that way. One person serves God this way; another person cares for a neighbor that way. 1 Corinthians 12.4 claims that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." And, "the body does not consist of one member, but of many" (1 Corinthians 12.14).

The Cathedral of St. Philip, and every Christian Church, is supposed to look different to different people. Some of us like the early 7:45 service; some of us want a louder and more boisterous 8:45 service; many of us adored the majestic 4:00 choral eucharist with Canon Neswick's exquisite organ gifts. Some of us never got to church at all; we were in the education wing, or we were preparing the grand reception for Pam Melton. Some of us were preparing to read applications for the Cathedral's outreach grants. Some of us were traveling to the Diocese's Alleluia Fund service.

It may have looked like confusion to the outside. What in the world do all these activities have in common? How do all these different sorts of folks claim that they are part of one Church?

Well, we are one Church, because one Spirit has called us to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. Pentecost takes us from babble to Spirit. In the Spirit, each of us hears the same gospel being proclaimed in our own language-in our particular form and custom and activity.

These various forms and customs and activities are not hindrances to our unity. They are the gifts of God that God has given us for the common good. Each of us, baptized in the Spirit, has something special to offer the world! Yes, each of us has a gift. When we use those gifts in love, community happens. And when we also accept others' gifts in love, the Spirit erupts in a brilliant Pentecost.

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