A dapper, elderly gentleman, very well-dressed, hair well-groomed, in a great looking suit and smelling slightly of a good aftershave, walks into an upscale cocktail lounge.

Seated at the bar is an elderly lady. The gentleman walks over, sits alongside of her, orders a drink, takes a sip and turns to her and says,” So tell me, do *I* come here often?

We all need help figuring out where we are and where we are going. In this story, the elderly man seeks out the elderly woman for guidance. [[1]](#endnote-1) As Christians we constantly seek out the Holy Spirit, that person of the Trinity that continues to guide us to the Truth of Jesus Christ in our contemporary lives. The Holy Spirit dwells with us and guides us. The Holy Spirit also dwells within us and fills us with its gifts so that we can be Christ and spread Christ in the world.

The Spirit enables us to more fully understand what Jesus has given to us; through it God continues to give us revelations about God’s self as we struggle with issues of right and wrong, and of the need for grace and reconciliation. The Holy Spirit remains present with us as we struggle to change the world for good.

But not only does the Holy Spirit remain with us but it also remains present in us. Renowned priest and theologian Henri Nouwen wrote, “Without Pentecost the Christ event—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—remains imprisoned in history as something to remember, think about, and reflect on. The Spirit of Jesus comes to dwell within us, so that we can become living Christs here and now. [[2]](#endnote-2)

The Holy Spirit dwelling within us helps us to pray when we can’t find the words and it changes us so that the things we most want are the things that God wants, too. The Holy Spirit makes us more willing to serve one another, more thankful for what we have, more joyous. The more we empty ourselves of things that block the Spirit – such as overwhelming desire for material things, or hatred or lack of forgiveness of others, or fear or jealousy or the need for control– the more room we create in our hearts for the Spirit to dwell – the more we allow ourselves to become living Christs.

The Holy Spirit also brings and distributes spiritual gifts that are used to build up the body of Christ. When the Holy Spirit came among and within the disciples on Pentecost, it brought the gift of sharing God’s love in the language of the people; at least one disciple was able to share the Gospel in each part of the world. In our time, we often puzzle about the gift of speaking in tongues, which some may have witnessed or experienced. This is certainly one of the gifts of the Spirit, but I prefer to think of this gift mentioned in Acts more broadly. People learn and accept things differently based upon their genetics, environment, and life experiences. Within any community of faith, the Holy Spirit has given to at least one person the gift of showing God’s love in a way that will be understood by a different type of person. Some folks understand God best through the language of nature, so God has placed within our community folks with the gift of sharing God with others through nature. Some folks hear the Gospel only when someone has shown empathy to them; the Holy Spirit has given to some the gift of great empathy. Some people hear God best through art or through music; the Spirit has given to some artistic or musical gifts. These are just examples, but each of us has a spiritual gift that enables us to be Christ and to spread Christ in the world.

Kevin Miller, senior pastor of the Church of the Savior in Illinois, tells this parable.

Once upon a time there was a master house builder and painter. He always designed, built and painted the homes all by himself—with his own hands … but then one day he had a remarkable idea. As he was standing by one of his houses, he saw a bunch of kids walking home from elementary school. He shouted, "Hey, kids." When they looked up, he asked them a surprising question: "How would you like to do some painting?"

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you what," he said, "I'll give each of you a bucket of paint and a brush, and you can paint my new house. Do you want to give it a try?"

"For real?" they squealed with delight.

The painter nodded as he said, "Yep, for real."

"Cool!" the kids said.

He opened up the back of his truck and pulled out a load of brushes and paint cans. The kids started splashing paint on his garage door. They got paint on the sidewalk, too, and some on each other. But they also got a lot of paint on the house—all different colors, especially on the parts of the house that were under 4 feet high.

As other kids came by on the sidewalk, they asked, "Can we do that, too?" And they joined in. In about an hour most of the first floor was now covered with paint.

The house painter's neighbors came over after dinner and took it all in. "What is going on?" they asked. Another blurted out, "Look, I gotta be honest, your house looks like a tornado ripped through Sherwin-Williams. What were you thinking?"

"Well," the house painter said, "I could have painted this house all by myself, but I've always built and painted houses to bring joy to others. So based on that goal, this is the most beautiful house I've ever made. They'll bring their friends to show what they've painted. And each one will say, 'This is the home of the master painter and builder, but it's also our house.'"

In the same way, when God the master creator and painter of the world, pours out his Holy Spirit on his followers, he hands every single one of us a can of paint and a brush, and he says, "Go to work. Use your gifts and let's paint a beautiful house for the world.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us and bring us gifts so that together we can all build that beautiful house that is Christ in the world.

1. Ian Markham, Lectionary Levity, *The Use of Humor in Preaching*, Church Publishing (2017) p 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Isabel Anders in *Synthesis*, May18B Pentecost, PNMSI Publishing Co. (2018) quoting Henri Nouwen [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Kevin Miller, “Parable About A Painter Reflects the Gifts of the Spirit,” found on Preachingtoday.com. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)