

(organ music)

- Good morning. Welcome to this celebration of Pentecost, the Lord's gift of the spirit to the church on this gorgeous Sunday in Duke Chapel. We will be led today in the celebration of the Eucharist and in preaching by our own Dean of the Chapel, William Willimon. We will be led in music by our summer choir and by our tenor, Mr. William McCullough. Those of you who are in town for the summer and wish to participate in the summer choir are invited to do so. Immediately following the service today, there will be a coffee on the lawn of the chapel. Let us stand for our Litany of Praise. Our help is in the name of the Lord who creates heaven and earth. (crowd chanting in unison) He rides in the heavens and sends forth his mighty voice. (crowd chanting in unison) How wonderful is God in his holy places, the God of Israel, giving strength and power to his people. (crowd chanting in unison) All who are led by the spirit of God are children of God. Lord, send forth your spirit and renew the face of the earth. (crowd chanting in unison) (organ playing) (crowd singing in unison)

- Please be seated. (page turning) Let us pray together the prayer for illumination. Open our hearts and minds, oh God. By the power of your holy spirit, so that as the word is read and proclaimed, we might hear your word, joy, amen. Our first lesson is taken from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The eighth chapter, verses 22 through 27. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves. We who have the first fruits of the spirit, we grown inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope, we were saved. Now, hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very spirit intercedes with sigh too deep for words and God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for the saints. According to the will of God. This is the word of the Lord

Crowd: Thanks be to God.

- Our second lesson is taken from the Acts of the Apostles. The second chapter, from the beginning through the 21st verse. 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 and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the holy spirit and began to speak in other languages as the spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem and at this sound, the crowd gathered and was bewildered because they heard them speaking in their native languages. Amazed and astonished, the people in the crowd asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we here, each of us, in our own native language Parthians, Meads, Alemites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; and visitors from Rome, both Jews and prosletites; Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we

hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean? But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the Eleven raised his voice and addressed them. "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen to what I say. Indeed these are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel." In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women in those days, I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and smokey mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is the word of the Lord.

Crowd: Thanks be to God.

- A few years ago a friend of mine, United Methodist Minister, graduate of Duke, a friend of mine and I were discussing the then current neo-charismatic movement that was sweeping through the churches. And my friend who is quite an intellectual, we had done graduate work together at Emory, I wanted to know, I wanted him to sort of help me think through this strange phenomenon. People speaking in tongues, members of my church going to faith healings, other... ..weird behavior. And as I was talking about the charismatic movement and some of my wonderings about it, I looked over at my friend and he had this sort of sheepish look on his face. And I said, "Wait a minute, you haven't spoken in tongues, have you?" And then he told me. It had been a difficult week, he hadn't been able to get to writing his sermon. He got up on Saturday morning, he went down to the church, he sat down at his desk, determined not to leave until he had finished writing that sermon. He said, "I was sitting there, and all of a sudden it was as if something seized me and my head fell back and I, my tongue started moving and there were these strange guttural sounds emanating from my throat. And then it was over and I felt a great sense of release and relief. I realized that I had experienced glossolalia, speaking in tongues." And I said to him, "Promise me you'll never tell anybody this story. You're a Duke graduate, I mean, what would people think?" (crowd lightly laughing) Now I don't know whether or not today's lesson from Acts 2 is talking about glossolalia, speaking in tongues. There's some doubt Luke even knew what that was. Paul talks about speaking in tongues. Says he's done it on many different occasions. Yet I do know that Acts 2, this account of what happened at Pentecost, is describing some weird, wonderful goings on. On the day of Pentecost, Jews from every nation were gathered together in one place and the spirit descended and they all began to speak in strange tongues and they all began to understand in strange ways. And upon hearing the Pentecostal commotion, the crowd out on the street said, "They're drunk. Jesus' people are drunk." Peter came out and addressed the crowd, giving the dubious defense, "We're not drunk! It's only 10 o'clock in the morning!" Now what do we make of this strange story? Here on this day of Pentecost, the birthday of the church? Tom Long who preaches often and well from this pulpit, tells about when he was a young pastor he was conducting a Confirmation class at his church. And he had just three little girls in his Confirmation class and one afternoon he was telling them about the church year and its various parts and he came to Pentecost. But the little girls had never heard of Pentecost so he told them well, "At Pentecost, that was the day the church was gathered together in one place, people from all over the world, the spirit descended and suddenly they

could hear each other, their divisions were healed, they could understand each other, tongues like a fire descended upon each person." Two of the little girls received this information impassively but one of the little girls sat there, her eyes got bigger and bigger, her mouth dropped open, and finally she said, "Gosh Reverend Long, I guess my family was absent on that Sunday." And maybe, if we're honest as that little girl, when we hear this story, we have to say, "Gosh, I guess I didn't make it to church that day." It's tough to read ourselves into this strange story of Pentecost. Why is that? One Sunday a few years ago, I got kind of carried away in the sermon, I raised my voice a couple of times, I think I gestured broadly with my arm. Someone down on the sixth row, obviously who had never been here before, got carried away. At the end of the sermon, he stood up and he shouted out, "Amen, right on!" (crowd laughing) I looked for the ushers to remove this person. You read Acts 2 and it's difficult to read yourself into the story, where people get the gift of God's spirit and they get out of control. This same spirit which empowered Jesus to do good. This spirit now settles upon the church and it transforms these strangers into a community. Releasing new powers within them, powers to hear, powers to speak, healing their old racial, nationalistic divisions. Folk watching them emerged from church that Sunday, said to one another, "Look at those Christians. They're drunk." Alas, when we emerge from church on Sunday, you're on your way out to the parking lot, when's the last time anyone, you heard anyone say on the way out, "Look at those Christians. They're in there, they're drunk again." More than likely what they say is, "Look at them, they look dead again." I tell you, there's, we have difficulty with this story and it's not just because we happen to be kind of modern people. It's because there's something sort of threatening about this story. We have to tell ourselves, we don't live in such an age, an age of the spirit. A new book, *The Churching of America*, published by Rutgers Press by Fink and Stark, two sociologists, tells the story of the steady decline of mainline Protestantism. Mainline Protestantism that's us. Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Baptist. Protestantism in America. And these sociologists say that from what they can see, religious vitality is related to three factors. And those factors are cost, stigma, and sacrifice. Those churches who demand a great cost from their members. Those churches that lay upon the backs of their members some social stigma. Those churches that ask for more sacrifice do better than those churches who ask for less. There has been a vast decline in American religious life, and yet, studies show that North Americans are just as religious as they've ever been. There basically has been no decline in the number of people who practice their Christian faith over the past 50 years in North America. The decline has been exclusively within mainline Protestantism. And yet there has been a rapid upsurge in the younger churches. The Church of God, the Assemblies of God, etc. In other words, these sociologists indicate that with respectability and affluence and education and a rise of a professional clergy, always comes decline. And that's tough to think about these matters around here. Maybe because if these sociologists are right, we are the instigators of mainline religious decline. And so, when we're faced with a story of Pentecost in Acts 2, or our neighborhood Assemblies of God congregation, we don't think holy spirit. We're conditioned to think that maybe these people have got some kind of psychological problem. Maybe they're the victims of some sort of cultural educational backwardness. Freud characterized religion as neurosis. He calls religion an intoxicant. Childishness to be overcome. And most of us, when we hear a story like Pentecost, we are all Freudians. I was teaching a class in the Divinity School, Field Education Seminar and that's when the students come in and they present episodes from their ministry and we look at them and we discuss them. And one of the students presented a case study in which, when he was a student pastor, a woman comes to him and says to the student pastor, "What does the Methodist church believe about speaking in tongues?" The pastor's first response was, "Oh my God

don't tell me you've gotten into that." And she said, "Well I don't know that I've gotten into it but in my Monday morning prayer and Bible study group, I had this very strange experience and after it's over someone says well dear that's speaking in tongues. You've got the gift of tongues. And I just wondered what we believe about it." To this, the pastor responded, "I wonder if you're still not in some grief over the death of your daughter." And she said, "Well certainly I'm in grief over the death of my daughter. Do you think this is related to that?" Then the young pastor says, "Have you thought about seeking professional help?" And she said, "Well yeah that's sort of why I came to you, the pastor." (crowd laughing) You see, there can be only one explanation in our reductionistic world view for such strange phenomena. This woman must be nuts. The young pastor never assumed that maybe what was going on here was a reworking of Acts 2. There was only one explanation in his urbane, educated, theologically sophisticated mind. Lady, you must be drunk. In 1927, Freud spoke of religion as some sort of psychosis. Religion is most active among people who are mentally unbalanced and yet, since 1927 there have been numerous studies and none of them show that there is the slightest bit of evidence to back up Freud's claim. And every study I know about, psychological studies of deeply religious people find a positive rather than a negative relationship between strong religious vitality and emotional health. Marx dismissed religion as the opiate of the masses. The poor man's cheap drug to take away some of the pain from daily existence. And yet as we watched the revolution that occurred in Eastern Europe, much of it directly tied to the churches, we now know what poor old Marx did not. Religion is not the opiate of the masses, it is the amphetamine of the poor. I'm saying there is no justification for our modern prejudice to relegate the born again or the spiritually engaged to the ranks of the mentally unbalanced. In fact, a recent study of American college students showed that there is a positive correlation between saying you're born again or that you identify yourself as a conservative evangelical and academic achievement in college. See we told ourselves that we were becoming modern and as we became modern, the world was going to get less religious, we were gonna all end up looking like England or something. Unfortunately there is no evidence for this in North America. As Richard Douhouse says, "North America more closely resembles India or Africa in our religiosity than England or Sweden or Northern Europe." It's only people who work around Universities and people who write for newspapers who persist in the outmoded notion that somehow religious faith is an outmoded vestige that we have put behind us. William James characterized true religion as white hot heat. And it does seem that a lot of people are getting heated up over faith. And yet all evidence to the contrary, don't you find it interesting we continue to sin against Pentecost. We continue to attempt reductionistically to explain away this disruptive outburst, this weird intrusion of the spirit. And I think you know why. Acts 2 is not a promise. For us it is a threat. The story of Pentecost is a threat that one Sunday we might all gather here in our bolted-down pews and our smug reasonableness and our bourgeoisie respectability only to be jumped from behind by the spirit. To be grabbed by our collective collars, shaken up and thrown into confusion. Intoxicated. And this is not a suggestion many of us welcome. Because most of us come here to be confirmed in what we already know. Most of us come here to be sure that the ruts we've chosen in life, are good ruts for us to be in. Not, we do not come here to be dislodged. Led by the spirit into some terra incognita. That we do not know. And so I say this story to us as a warning, a threat, you be real careful here. As you come to the table today with hands open, maybe even your mind open. Be careful. Because scripture says the wind, the holy wind blows where it will. God's spirit will not be tamed or house-broken by us. Not by our liturgy, my sermons, this church, modern policing of what's possible and impossible. This spirit will not be tamed by us. Your soul might catch fire. You might break free, even, especially here. Now I would hate to see nice, respectable

people like you with mortgages, I would hate to see you go out of here drunk. No I wouldn't. (crowd murmuring)

- The Lord be with you.

Crowd: And also with you.

- Let us pray, let us stand for our Pentecost litany. When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place and all of the many foreigners heard the witnesses speaking in their own tongue. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak in the language of our need. Let us hear how our deepest hungers, desires, and aspirations can be fulfilled by your goodness and in your service. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak in the language of our fear. Let us hear how our worries about the future and about each other and about ourselves can find rest in your providential care. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak in the language of our guilt. Let us hear how our confessed shame for wrong things done and for good things undone is covered by your forgiveness. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak in the language of our gratitude. Let us hear how our honest thanks relate us, not only to those with whom we live but also to you the Lord and giver of life. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak to us in the language of joy. Let us hear how our gladness and our delight not only brighten this world but honor you who made our world. (crowd speaking in unison) Speak to us in the language of hope. Let us hear how our yearning and our expectations are not just wishful thinking but responses to your promise. (crowd speaking in unison) Now let us greet one another with words and signs of God's peace. (crowd murmuring) Would you please be seated? Our Lord said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Let us therefore worship God with our tithes and our offerings. (organ playing) (man singing) (choir singing) (organ playing) (crowd singing)

William: Let us give thanks to God. The Lord be with you.

Crowd: And also with you.

William: Lift up your hearts.

Crowd: We lift them up to the Lord.

William: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Crowd: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

- All praise and thanks are yours, life giving Lord. In the beginning your spirit moved over the face of the waters, you breathed into us the breath of life. When we resisted and grieved your spirit came upon the waters and upon us, upon prophets, upon teachers, anointing all to speak your word in truth. In the folds of time you gave us your son Jesus. At his baptism in the Jordan your spirit descended upon him and announced him as your beloved son. With your spirit upon him he turned away the temptation of sin and proclaimed justice to all peoples brought good news to the poor and released the captives. Freedom to the

oppressed. By the baptism, his death and resurrection you gave birth to your church. At his ascension, you exulted him to sit at your right hand where according to his promise, he is with us always baptizing us with the holy spirit and with fire. As on the day of Pentecost, we pray with your people on earth and all the company of heaven. Praising your name and joining their unending hymn. (organ playing) (crowd singing in unison) On the night he offered himself up for us, he took bread, he gave thanks to you, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And when the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples and said, "Drink from this, all of you. For this is the blood of my new covenant poured out for you and many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." And so in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith. (organ playing) (crowd singing in unison) On the day that you raised him up from the dead, Jesus was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread and in the power of your spirit. Therefore in remembrance of all your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we ask you to accept this, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which we offer in union with Christ's sacrifice for us. As a living and holy surrender of ourselves. Send the power of your holy spirit on us and on these gifts. That in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this wine we may know the presence of the living Christ and be renewed in his likeness. All honor and glory is yours almighty father now and forever. (organ playing) (crowd singing in unison) And now with the confidence of children, we pray as Christ has taught us. (crowd chanting in unison) Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

- When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing in the body of Christ? When we give thanks over the cup, is not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? Come to the Lord's table. (shuffling noises) (footsteps) (organ playing) (choir singing)

- Please stand for the Benediction. Now by the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you now and always. (organ playing) (choir singing) (crowd singing in unison)