



Cottonwoods and Confession

The Talking Tree...And the Winds of the Holy Spirit

By Michael Davis, Office of Lay Ministry



Greetings!

This past Saturday eighteen of our young parishioners celebrated their first sacrament of Reconciliation. As one of the catechists I assisted them in lighting a candle to signify Christ's light in our lives as they returned from receiving God's grace and absolution. I asked them, "How was it? One second grade boy responded, "It was Fun!"

Wow, that brought a big smile to my face and heart. He was so open to the movement of the Spirit. He was fully experiencing how reconciliation reconnects us with God, ourselves, family and community.

This got me to thinking about how the Spirit moves us towards active participation in parish life. We respond to God's calling Spirit when we serve as catechists, liturgical ministers, or lay ecclesial ministers. By allowing or reconciling ourselves to this prompting we are nourished by the sacraments and the often fun fellowship of being with other followers of Christ. This Divine wind at our backs can keep us on the path of happiness and growth in God's love and community.

"The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born in the Spirit."

John 3:8

Walking against a strong wind is exhausting. Moving with the wind can feel almost effortless. When we are open to the Spirit of the Lord, we are filled with energy, direction, and freedom. When we resist the movements of the Spirit, nothing seems to work no matter how hard we try. The movement of the Spirit in our lives is seldom predictable, but always dependable.

As we continue to navigate and seek God's guidance in our lives, St. Catherine of Siena's imagery and analogy of the spiritual life as the wind of the Holy Spirit moving through the large branches of a tree may be of help as we discern where the wind of the Holy Spirit is leading us. For those who serve as lay ministers and for parish leaders who engage in the process of Strategic Planning-One Future~*Un Futuro*, it is important to keep the wind at our backs. We may imagine this breeze moving through and past a large cottonwood tree or as one would say in Spanish the *álamo grande*.

What does St. Catherine's tree say to me?

St. Catherine of Siena in her Dialogues pictures the spiritual life as a large tree:

- The trunk of the tree is **LOVE**.
- The core of the tree, that middle part that must be alive for the rest of the tree to be alive, is **PATIENCE**.
- The roots of the tree are **SELF-KNOWLEDGE**.
- The many branches, reaching out into the air, are **DISCERNMENT**.

Together we pray for continued guidance,

"Spirit of the Lord,
help us to go in the direction you send us."

Contact me regarding Lay Ministry or as resource for Strategic Planning. My contact information is on Page 1.

Movement of the Spirit



wagichun wagi - talking tree
(the cottonwood - sacred to the Lakota)

