

There's something nice about free refills at a restaurant. It means you never need to worry about running out. A diet coke lover could sit at McDonalds all afternoon and drink diet coke to contentment while she catches up on emails and works on other projects.

It's not nearly as exciting to go to a restaurant where they only sell cans of soda. You don't want one can, you want five! Sometimes I'd just opt for water at a restaurant like that. I can drink soda from the can at home for cheaper than the restaurant offers.

Our Gospel text has thirst on the mind also. **“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”**” More important than a sugary beverage, Jesus has in mind something much more life giving: the Holy Spirit.

To continue our analogy, if the Holy Spirit is a soda, Pentecost doesn't mark the birth of the Holy Spirit, but rather, the way the Holy Spirit comes to His people. On Pentecost JESUS OPENED THE TAP ON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

First, I. In former times, the Holy Spirit flowed on a case by case basis. To be certain, we know that the Holy Spirit is God. He is the third person of the Holy Trinity. From eternity He has existed. Already in the second verse of the Bible, at creation we read, **“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”** The Holy Spirit has always existed.

It is diet coke whether you drink it from a can or drink it from the soda fountain, but restaurants without a soda fountain have to purchase their drinks on a case by case basis.

Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit manifested Himself in a limited way. One can at a time, it seems. We see this in the Old Testament reading from Numbers 11. The Holy Spirit rested on Moses, and the remarkable thing was that that Spirit was poured out onto seventy of the elders. **“And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it.”**

Throughout the Old Testament, figures are mentioned to have the Spirit rest on them: Joseph, Moses, Bezalel, the builder of the tabernacle, Balaam, Joshua, David, and others. The point is that the Holy Spirit resting on the people of God was much rarer occurrence.

To be certain, we know that the Holy Spirit was working to create and sustain faith in the coming Messiah among the Old Testament believers. There can be no faith without the Holy Spirit working. However, we see the limited way the Holy Spirit worked in the Old Testament times as illustrated by our reading from Numbers.

But Jesus changed this around. In Him we partake freely of the Holy Spirit. II. Jesus' ministry opened the taps to pour out the Holy Spirit. At the feast of tabernacles, Jesus gets up in the middle of the congregation and cries out, “**If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’**” Quite an odd thing to hear if you think about it.

But Jesus’ ministry was all about bringing the fresh waters of the Gospel to those around Him. Moses gave the people water to drink in the wilderness, but Jesus promises the women at the well a living water that is greater than any type of earthly water.

Jesus feeds 5,000 through a miraculous multiplying of fish and loaves, but He promises something even greater, that He is the bread of life in whom our spiritual needs are satisfied.

For the people of the Old Testament, their access to the presence of God was limited. God’s presence was centered around worship in the temple, and to be near God would mean to be near a geographical location. Even then, only the High Priest could go into the holy of holies, the place where the very presence of God dwelt. Talk about limitations!

Jesus Christ changed the game as He Himself is God. In Him we have access to God’s presence. All those that Jesus came into contact with had a direct interaction with God Himself. And in many cases, we see people who leave refreshed.

Think about how many lives He changed through the miraculous healings, the life changing teaching, and the words of forgiveness granted to those who came to Him with heavy hearts.

But this ministry culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. John records Jesus’ last words: “**When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**” This giving up of the spirit is not only a way to say He died, but it is also telling us that He is giving forth His Spirit, the Holy Spirit which dwells in me and you.

Likewise, the rivers of living water we see flow forth from Jesus’ side, “**But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.**” From His side flows waters, these are the baptismal waters that wash and cleanse us. These are the living waters which quench our thirst. Jesus’ death and resurrection opened the taps, so we no longer experience the Spirit in a limited, case by case basis as in the Old Testament, but in a free-flowing abundant way as the disciples did on Pentecost.

Pentecost is about the Holy Spirit to be sure, but it is about how the Holy Spirit ultimately delivers us Jesus.

Thus, III. Through this ministry of the Spirit, we share Jesus with others. This sets the stage for the reading from Acts wherein the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they preached in many different languages. Peter sees this as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. ““ ‘**And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;**” This quote leads us to believe that it wasn’t just the twelve Apostles who received the Holy Spirit that day, but the whole company of Christians present for the Festival of Pentecost.

The miracle of Pentecost is just this: free refills! But more amazing than free refills at a coffee shop, restaurant, or bar. God gives Himself in an unlimited way through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to deliver to us Jesus in multifaceted ways. Through our belief in Jesus, out of our hearts flow living waters.

It is through this ministry of the Spirit that the Church was able to grow in such a miraculous way in its earliest centuries. It’s through the Spirit that we are able to endure despite persecution and hardships in this modern era. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to be the hands and feet of Jesus to those around us. Through the Holy Spirit, we are able to share that same love and kindness that Jesus showed to those He interacted with in His time.

All this happens as we continue to drink deeply from the source itself. The free refills only last when you stay at the McDonalds. The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament to create and sustain faith. We are called to regularly read our Bibles, regularly attend Church, and regularly partake of the Lord’s Supper. All of these things are the means by which the Holy Spirit continues to take root and make His home in our hearts so that we can flow this living water to others.

We have hope because by the Spirit we know we are forgiven by Jesus. Our pasts are in the past and we have a bright future ahead of us. Through this access to living water, we are satisfied, handing our anxieties, fears, and disappointments to Jesus and giving our lives over to the direction of the Spirit. We have a destination, on the day we die, this free flowing Spirit in our lives will take us to be with Jesus in a new heavens and a new earth in a resurrected body without pain or suffering.

And it’s this good news that we can freely and abundantly share with others. There is a world of thirsty people out there. As we are filled with the living waters brought to us by Jesus Himself, we can share those living waters of the Holy Spirit with those around us, giving them much more than just a can of consolation or a sip of solace. We can provide them God Himself to give hope, to satisfy, and to provide new life. Amen!