

By Pat Haggerty

Some of you may recall a television quiz show that was on years ago called "Password. " The premise of the show was to have one partner give clues for a word that would elicit the correct response (word) from the other partner. Only single words could be given. For example, if I said: hot/flame/red/heat, would you guess the word "fire?"

Fire conjures up many images. Fire can be a good thing or a bad thing. There is nothing better than to sit by a cozy fire on a cold night watching the flames dance in the fireplace and feeling the warmth of the embers. Or, imagine toasting marshmallows with a long stick over the open flame of your campfire. The resulting smores are worth the effort!

Conversely, think of the horrors that can be created by a fire gone out of control. We have the recent news stories from Alberta, Canada, to remind us of the devastation caused by wildfires that can cause the loss of homes, property and even entire towns. Also, we continually warn little ones of the danger of fire---"don't play with matches," or "be careful near the stove." We are trying to warn them of potential injury.

Let us move out of this concrete realm into the spiritual realm and think of fire as it relates to God. How blessed were the disciples of the Lord as they received the gifts of the Spirit through the tongues of fire! We read from the Acts of Apostles just what happened on that Pentecost: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and

came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tonuges, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." (2:2-4)

Dwell on that picture for a few moments. The disciples must have been so fearful. They must have been trembling and nervous. The sound of the fierce wind was a foreboding for them of something strange and amazing that was about to happen. The descent of the flames over each one of them must have caused alarm and panic. What ensued next was even more confusing---they were all speaking in their native tongues. "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?" (2:6-7)

There are so many lessons to be learned from Pentecost. We are often like the disciples---fearful, uncertain, in a panic. We need to rest in the assurance that the Spirit will bring us his peace. Not only that, he gives us his gifts so that we can share them with others. We have different gifts to be used in different ways. It is up to us to use them and to use them wisely. However we live out the message of Pentecost, we know for certain that we will always be ignited by the fire of God's love!