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SEVEN WORDS FULFILLED The Seven-fold Gift of the Spirit

After Jesus spoke seven times from the cross, "he bowed the head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). Christ's surrender of his spirit is a voluntary act. (See John 10:17-18: "No man taketh it [i.e. 'my life'] from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again".) Thus Christ's "obedience unto death" is an act of divine freedom and power, an act of witness to the truth compelled by nothing but love for the Father- it's an offering made "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14).

Seven is the Biblical number for fullness and fulfillment. On this feast of Pentecost – a week of weeks after Easter, a time of fulfillment not just sevenfold but seven times seven – the offering of the Son to the Father "through the eternal Spirit", declared in his sevenfold word, was fulfilled in the gift of the same eternal Spirit, poured out upon the disciples in Jerusalem (epistle lesson, Acts 2:1-11). The divine Spirit of freedom and power, the Spirit of love wherein Christ freely bore witness to the truth, "in obedience unto death" – this same sevenfold Spirit has now been given by the Lord to his Church, that in the freedom and power of love, we too may bear witness to the truth, in obedience unto death. In this Spirit, in love's obedient witness to the truth of God set forth in his Word, our souls are filled with God. This is perhaps the central theme of today's rather complex gospel lesson (John 14:15-21 combined with 23-31). Jesus said: "If a man love me," by the gift of the Spirit, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him". We rejoice today that by the gift of the Spirit the world is filled with the saving knowledge of God's Word. "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia: and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice, alleluia, alleluia" (Introit: Spiritus domini. Wisdom 1:7, with Psalm 68.)

The Rev'd Gavin G. Dunbar

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