

May 23, 2010 – The Day of Pentecost

The Very Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

“Lord take my lips and speak through them; take our minds and think through them; take our hearts and set them on fire for your Holy Gospel.”
Amen.

God knows that we cannot do it alone. We often fool ourselves into believing that we are capable of going it alone without God; others may even play a role in convincing us that it is possible. Of course, God always knows better.

Back in 1995 I was on my first mission trip to Ecuador with the Bishop of Atlanta, Frank Allan, the retired Bishop of Venezuela, Onell Soto, and a rector colleague of mine, Fred Jones, from Grace Church in Gainesville, along with several others from the Diocese of Atlanta. The purpose of our mission trip was to establish a Companion Diocese Relationship with Central Ecuador, and as such our travels took us from the capital city of Quito to some very remote indigenous Indian villages high in the mountains. And it was in the mountains at about 10,000 feet above sea level, in a town called Guarando, that I believed I could go it alone.

The night before I had become quite ill in my room, later discovered to be food poisoning, however I decided not to mention this to anyone as we had a long journey ahead of us to a village filled with Christians that awaited our arrival. At breakfast I barely ate, drank nothing, and quietly excused myself

to be sick one more time before our departure. Then into the old Range Rovers and off for about a four hour journey on difficult terrain.

Fortunately for this priest going it alone, Bishop Onell Soto had arranged that on the way to the next village we would we stop and see the beautiful Anglican cathedral in the populous city of Ambato. As we entered the city and pulled up to the cathedral, some three hours since we began, I was light-headed and beginning to become disoriented. Fred Jones and I walked together into the cathedral and as we knelt to pray, I finally succumbed to the knowledge that I could not do it alone. I told Fred how sick I had been and collapsed into this 6 foot-four gentle priest's arms. His quick thinking and the blessing of a doctor's office across the street with IV fluids literally saved my life. They told me much later I was very close to death from severe dehydration—if I had only realized hours earlier that I could not do this alone.

During the days leading up to Jesus' ascension to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father, we get a strong sense of his worry for his disciples and followers that they not be left to do it alone. Last Sunday's gospel passage gave us a profound insider's view of just how concerned Christ was as he privately prayed to God, As you Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me...I in them and you in me, that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17)