May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

There are moments in each of our lives when we begin to hear a new language. We know it through our deepest longings and desires. It fills us with hope, life, and peace. It lies hidden deep within us. It’s always been there but then one day we hear it in a new way, as if for the very first time. It describes, reveals, and makes present the deeds of God’s power in our lives. That is the miracle and gift of Pentecost.

It happens when we fall in love and find our lover’s voice does not just communicate information but speaks presence, union, and oneness. It’s that day when all of creation speaks. It’s in moments of joy-filled creativity and we wonder, “Where did that come from? How did I do that?” It is the soft voice in the midst of sorrow and loss that says, “I am here. It won’t be easy but you will be ok,” and somehow we have the strength to get up and meet the next day. It is the voice of compassion that enables us to care for another. It is a word of encouragement that points the way, a word of truth that causes us to turn around, a word of peace we embody as a reconciled relationship.

These and a thousand others like them are the moments of Pentecost, moments when we know God is not just with us or around us but within us and we are somehow different; more real, more alive, more whole. These, however, are often not the story of Pentecost with which we are most familiar. Instead, we listen for a sound like the rush of a violent wind to come from heaven and fill our entire house. We look for divided tongues, as of fire, to appear and rest on us. We wait to speak in another language.

Sound, tongues, and languages are how St. Luke describes the day of Pentecost. They are the images we most often associate with Pentecost but they are not the story of Pentecost. We sometimes confuse the two, the images and the story. It’s easy to do because the images are so vivid, so powerful, so different from ordinary, everyday life. With their power, however, comes danger.

The danger is that we look at these images but fail to see through them. We allow the images to define and identify rather than point and invite. When that happens the images lose their power and purpose. They can take us nowhere and Pentecost becomes a single event in history; unique, limited, and seemingly unavailable to us. Sound, tongues, and languages are not the keepers of Pentecost. They are the pointers to Pentecost.

When we see through these images we find that Pentecost is happening in all times, all places, and all circumstances. We realize that Pentecost is not a sound like the rush of a violent wind. It is not divided tongues of fire. It is not speaking in other languages. In and of themselves sound, tongues, and languages have no significance. They are meaningless. Their meaning is found only in hearing.

Hearing is what “amazed and astonished” on the day of Pentecost. They were not amazed and astonished at the sound of wind, the flaming tongues, or the foreign languages. They were amazed and astonished, asking, “*How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language*?”

That means that Pentecost is more than sound, tongues, and languages. Those are just the images of Pentecost. I’m not suggesting the images of Pentecost are not real but that they are more real than we know. They are the gateway to our own story of Pentecost. They empower us to open ourselves to an invisible world, to cross old boundaries, to be a different way, and to live a new life. They make us “capable of God.” Ultimately, that’s what Pentecost is about, becoming “capable of God.” That is not our doing. It is the Holy Spirit’s doing. The Holy Spirit makes us each “capable of God.” It is unique and personal to each one of us.

If you want to know how you are being made “capable of God” then go to the places where you hear in your own “native language.” There you will hear the stories of God’s presence filling your life. They will be stories of love, hope, joy; stories of patience, gentleness, courage, and peace; stories of mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation; stories of wisdom, creativity, and wonder; stories of healing, life, and resurrection. Amen.