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Kindle in us the fire of your love

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Kindle in us the

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I hear you take out insurance policies against me — fire insurance. Are you afraid of me? Are you scared of the damage I might cause you? Is that why you try to make your house — and your life — fireproof?

I see you huddling close to each other and to me when you light your winter fires. Then you appreciate me. I see you gathering around me when you get your campfires going. I like it when I bring your songs and stories to the surface.

Sometimes you worship me. Sometimes you live in dread of me — you call the fire brigade to put me out — your firefighters extinguish me.

I fascinate you — don’t I? My shapes, my wavering flames, my glowing embers, my friendly warmth and also my destructive powers.

I fascinated Moses once as I flamed out of a desert bush; burning, burning, burning — yet not burning up, not burning out. I drew him towards me, but not too close. From out of me my Maker spoke: “Approach no farther, Moses, Respect my space. Fear my flames. You and I share holy ground.”

In my presence Moses took off his shoes. In my presence Moses and my Maker talked. I introduced them to each other. I brought them together. In my presence Moses came to know my Maker.

Later on I reappeared ahead of Moses and his wandering desert band. I helped them make it through the night. Because I led the way, the darkness held no fear for them. Their storytellers talked of me as a pillar — pillar of strength, pillar of reassurance, pillar of God’s guidance, pillar of fire.

I made my presence felt on Sinai’s peak. Moses and my Maker held their summit meeting there and to mark their tête-à-tête I put on one of my spectacles: wreathing smoke, shooting
flames, thunderbolts, lightning flashes. Worthy of an Olympic opening — if I may say so. The audience was impressed. I heard their ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ — applause, applause for special effects.

Many years later, filled with my spirit, Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed: “I have come to cast fire on the earth. And how I wish it were already kindled.” A fire’s not a fire till it burns. I didn’t come to be remembered. I didn’t come to be admired. I came to set the world on fire.

And yet, and yet — one of your poets, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, got it right:

Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

See — come closer — notice the variety of flames — let them fascinate you — warm yourself.

When you celebrated Pentecost did you recall Luke’s description of my special effects: “Divided tongues as of fire, appeared among them; and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.”

One tongue per person — a different tongue for each of them: “I did it my way” — no longer dumb, they dumbfounded others. They were accused of having had too much new wine too early in the day. Yes — my spirit had gone to their heads — and to their hearts. They were acting under its influence,

You, on the contrary, are too sober too much of the time — you dilute my spirit. I like what my Scotsman, John Dalrymple, wrote: “When the Spirit came he came with wind and fire. In modern life wind and fire are two of the things we take out insurance policies against.” Don’t spend your money on such insurances. Trust me. There’s no need to be afraid. Dare to pray: “Come Holy Spirit. Kindle in us the fire of your love.” I like to set hearts on fire.