Floyd J. Tidd, Territorial Commander:

Pentecost. Here we are celebrating together with the church around the world Pentecost this year. It's more than just the official end of the Easter season, and Pentecost is not simply about observing an ancient tradition or a ceremony. It's not a time to pine away at the great Spirit-filled days that the church enjoyed in the past. Pentecost is about what God continues to do, and wants to do for you and for me today, 50 days after we celebrated Easter this year. It's what God wants to do for you and I, it's what God wants to do through you and I.

In the opening chapter of Acts, Luke records for us the instruction Jesus gave to his disciples on one occasion following his resurrection, and before leaving to return to the father. He said to his disciples, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father has promised you, which you've heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

There were two key messages for his disciples. First, that he had given them a mission. They were to be his witnesses. They had witnessed the life, the teaching, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their mission was to witness to that reality of God so loving the world that he sent His only son, that whosoever believes in Him could be saved. He reminds them not only that they were given a mission, but He reminded them to wait for the gift, the gift that He had promised. The gift that the Father would send, the gift of His Holy Spirit. Power to be all the God had called them to be, power to do that all the God had in mind for them to do.

Over these recent weeks, as we have been journeying together through the COVID-19 pandemic, we have called upon and received from God answers to our prayers, that he would send His comforter, that we would know His promises fulfilled, time and again, for ourselves, for our families, our friends, and for our communities. God is faithful to His promise. And as He promised to his disciples the Holy Spirit, He was faithful to that promise. But His promise of the Spirit was not just to comfort His disciples, but to empower them. Power, to make us all that he has in mind for us to be. A people conformed to the likeness of His son, Jesus Christ, a people who today continue to bear witness to the reality of a resurrected Jesus.

The Salvation Army is a movement, we believe raised up by God and called to share the love of Jesus, to meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world. The Salvation Army is a movement made up of individuals who live out that God-given mission, even in the midst of this unique time. We hear again the instruction of Jesus to his disciples, that we have been entrusted with a mission, and that we weighed upon His Spirit, whom he has given to us, and it's in the power of his Spirit that we live out the mission, lives that witnessed to the reality of Christ.

Even in our moments of weakness, when our need for power is plain, the Lord has made provision. When the darkness falls around us, when we're bewildered and afraid, God has made provision. Everlasting arms of love that we are daily made aware of, nothing robbing God's servant of the peace that He bequeaths. Because God has made His provision, His Holy Spirit. Because of his provision, His Holy Spirit, this promised presence falling again afresh upon his army, we continue to be His witnesses, continue to give hope today. A hope that does not disappoint.

Can I invite you today? If you have never asked the Lord to fill you with his Holy Spirit, then Pentecost is a wonderful opportunity to do that. Perhaps for you who are feeling drained, feeling a desire to live out the mission, but not the energy, not the reserves to do that, to be His witness, can I invite you to join with me in this prayer? Simply saying, "Lord, fill me with your Spirit, so that I will be in tune with your Spirit, that I might be your witness, transformed by your Spirit on this Pentecost Sunday."

Can I invite you to ask with me once again, what does a Spirit-filled Salvation Army look like? What would a Salvation Army made up of Spirit-filled Christians living Holy lives, obeying the voice of God's Spirit, practicing the presence of God in our daily lives, living as if knowing Jesus makes a difference, what will that look like with a fresh flow of His Holy Spirit across this great army?

Pentecost is certainly an opportunity, a suitable time for us to imagine what God might want the Salvation Army to look like going forward. It's a time for us to find freedom from that which binds us, and from whatever has been keeping us from unrestricted faithful service. Pentecost is a time for justice. Pentecost is a time for making a difference in our communities. Pentecost is a time of Spirit-filled, empowered people to share the love of Jesus. These are the things that happen when believers believe and accept the gift that God has given to us in His Holy Spirit. We claim His provision. Holy Spirit, promise presence. Fall on us individually, and as your army once again. Holy Spirit, make us all we long to be.

Your people, your army. Can I leave us with this question, posed by General John Gallons in one of his songs from the musical Spirit, when he simply says this, "What does the Spirit say to the churches? What does the Spirit say to you? If you have ears, then hear of the Spirit, do what the Spirit tells you to." Make God indeed blesses army with a fresh anointing of his Spirit, and may you know a fresh touch of his Holy Spirit upon your life this Pentecost Sunday. God bless you.