

Homilies from last Sunday

Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost – Year A

Readings: Acts: 2-11, 1 Corinthians: 12: 3-7, 12: 13, John: 20: 19-23



Fr Michael says:

The richness of our celebration is revealed in our linking it to the Celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, but linked also to the rejoicing in the Gift of the Covenant on Mount Sinai. The story goes that a mighty wind turned to a flame of fire, as a voice proclaimed the Law! The fire then split and hovered over the 70 leaders – but symbolic also of all the nations of the known world: hence a universal message! This proclamation reverses the sin of Babel, the dispersal of the people into nations, caused by pride and brings everyone into one again! As we recognise and live our gifts and talents, so in the power of the Spirit we recognise her work through us for all those around us. John in the Gospel reinforces the link with the Resurrection and Ascension with Pentecost, all aspects of the same reality as our means of entering fully into this celebration.

We see how the disciples had shut themselves off from everyone, before this event. Jesus' promise about the gift of the Spirit is now fulfilled, in the power given to be witnesses. This empowerment is key to what happens: this is an "in" word for our times, for disadvantaged groups; players who have lost direction. The disciples had been promised this – we need it to be given to us, to live our mission, it is the means for us to do this – we do not leave it to others, because it is WE who are empowered!

The Holy Spirit came down on the disciples in wind and fire: symbolising power, uprooting and moving. Fire refines and transforms. This is the power of God for us: His presence and action are visible; we are given energy, momentum, enthusiasm, courage, the love and passion to get on with our task Christ has given to us. The Spirit helps, but does not act in our place!

This change is gradual; it has to be a growth process, which can be slow and painful, as we do not easily give up on our past ways of doing things! This change becomes possible because of the hope that is given to us: when we know someone believes in us, takes an interest in us – above all when we feel loved and wanted. We come out of our shells and our hidden energies are released. The miracle of human change is the only real miracle we need to experience.

When spring is here, the heat of the sun warms gently and lovingly the plants and trees, buds appear, the shells which kept out the cold and frost so well, burst under this gentle touch. It is like the power of love which gently yet powerfully, allows life to burgeon and blossom. "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, enkindle in them the fire of your love: send forth the Spirit and you shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth!"

Homily for Eighth Sunday of Easter 2014 Pentecost

Acts 2:1-11; 1Cor 12:3-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23



Fr Jean-Marie says:

Today, Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day when the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. One of the roles of the Spirit is to strengthen us in our faith and in our sacramental Christian life. Let it suffice for instance to say that there is a link between the Holy Spirit and the sacraments of the Eucharist and marriage. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus is made present in the Holy Eucharist. Through the power of the Spirit the elements of bread and wine are transformed into the Lord's Body and Blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives us the courage to partake in the body and blood of Jesus. We pray today for children who are making their first communion that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost may constantly give them the desire to share in the Eucharist. In his pastoral letter, our archbishop also invites us today to see Pentecost as the feast of the family. He reminds us that marriage and family life are essentially the work of the Holy Spirit. He tells us that the strength of love holding a family together is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of marriage is the human participation in that divine love which has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Spirit forms the 'communion of persons' between a man and woman.

Today, our Archbishop wants us to talk about the Growing in Faith Campaign. Fr Michael and I have had the time speak about this campaign in different masses. Let me focus briefly our attention on the project of our parish. Beside supporting priestly life at all stages and encouraging social action, the campaign aims at **strengthening the life of the parishes**. There are 214 parishes in the diocese and there is always some aspect of parish life that can be improved for the present and the future generations. To undertake our parish project and to support our wider responsibilities, we are aiming to raise £225,000 in pledges over the next five years. If the campaign is successful, this will be the legacy of our generation to our Parish, to our faith, to the future generations. We hope

1. to refurbish the flat where Fr Christopher was living, as accommodation for other retired priests in the future.
 2. to support our Pastoral Assistants, allowing them to respond more fully to the needs of our parish. Also, we hope to promote families through training programmes aimed at enriching couples' married life.
 3. to improve the quality and eco-friendly aspects of our Church/Hall, heating and insulation.
 4. to support and build up the networks and groups that work to help those in need in our Parish.
- Let us pray that the Spirit of Pentecost may strengthen and give us courage to bear witness to Jesus in our daily living of sacramental life. May the same spirit help us to discern the divine wisdom behind the ongoing campaign in the diocese and kind of support we want to give individually. Amen.