

Pentecost A 2020

On that Pentecost day in Jerusalem the crowds, who came from all over, were astonished that they could hear the apostles and disciples speaking in their own language. But the real miracle, the real working of the Spirit was that the hearers heard a message that they understood. A message that changed their whole lives - the Good News of Jesus Christ. This was the language that they really understood. One can only imagine the joy, love and thanksgiving with which the apostles spoke of a message that came straight from their hearts. All their previous fears had gone completely. They possessed a newfound peace that set their hearts free. They wanted more than anything to share their joy with all those ready and open to receive it. The Holy Spirit did the rest. Paul's great insight was to see that we all receive the gift of the Spirit in different ways and that it is only together that we discover the true power and strength of that Spirit. It is as though, whenever we share our gifts, it opens us to the gifts within others that not only connects with us but unites us. In sharing the Good News, we therefore grow stronger not weaker. **In the early days of the Church** it was believed that the sacrament of forgiveness could only be given once. Christians confessed their sins to each other not only to acknowledge and own their sins and failings but to receive forgiveness. Jesus wanted sins to be forgiven. It was the purpose of salvation to heal. Although retaining sins can be seen as not granting forgiveness, it could also be understood as preventing sin from harming us. In Baptism we not only receive new life, the life of God, but we are also shielded from the effects of evil and become a temple of the Spirit. God never does anything by halves. God not only forgives sins but he offers protection from all its effects. God's forgiveness is like a vaccine which not only shields us from the full effects of a virus but strengthens us to fight it in the future. If we take the analogy further, sin is like the flue in that it keeps evolving and we need to keep being inoculated anew. It shows us that reconciliation is not only necessary but important in maintaining a healthy life. Only when we acknowledge our sins can we move forward. Isn't that what happened to the apostles and disciples in the upper room on that Pentecost day? They were set free from all their fears, their failures in the past, their ignorance and misunderstanding of Jesus teaching. They moved forward not because they themselves had become perfect, far from it. They moved forward because, despite all their faults, Jesus believed in them. They moved forward confident that they journeyed with the Spirit who would make up for what was lacking. This is the Spirit we have received. The Spirit who renews his presence in our lives to give us new hope, new joy, a new peace, a new sense of belief knowing that, wherever we go, whatever we do, think or pray in the future, the Spirit will be present. **The Holy Spirit has come. The Holy Spirit is present. The Holy Spirit is in you and has come to stay.**

A Benedictine nun, Macrina Wiederkehr offers us these thoughts for further reflection:

"You live in a world of theophanies. Holiness comes wrapped in the ordinary. There are burning bushes all around you. Every tree is full of angels. Hidden beauty is waiting in every crumb."

"Linger awhile over each person you meet, each person you live with, each relationship, even those people you see walking through the crowds, the strangers you do not know. Look on them with love. Contemplate them. Take them into your heart."

"Every experience, every thought, every word, every person in your life is a part of a larger picture of your growth.... they can be nourishing if you give them your real presence."

In Baptism we become a **tabernacle for the source of life**, so, *"when you come to understand this old, yet often forgotten truth, you will know what is meant by the words 'heaven on earth.' This is it. You are beginning to live heaven on earth in the Divine dwelling within you. You, frail earth-creature, having given your frailty over to God, you have created a place of splendour within the depths of your being, a holy and eternal space where you meet God face to face. **Cherish this truth. It is a costly grace.**"*

Holy Spirit, fill me with your power and your peace so that I might travel fearlessly through the process of becoming life-giving and nourishing to others. Life-giving Spirit... help me become the Child of God I was created to be!

A man goes into a pet shop to buy a parrot. The shop owner points to three identical parrots on a perch and says, "The parrot on the left costs £500."

"Why does the parrot cost so much?" asks the man. The owner says "Well that parrot knows how to use a computer."

The man then asks about the next parrot and is told that it costs £1,000 because it can do everything the first parrot can do plus it knows how to write computer machine code. Naturally, the increasingly curious man asks about the third parrot, only to be told that it costs £2,000.

Needless to say, the man asks, "Wow! What can this parrot do?"

To which the owner replies,

"To be honest I have never seen it do anything but the other two parrots call him **BOSS!**"