

Readings for the Feast of Pentecost

8th June 2025

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 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.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

Second Reading: Romans 8:14-17

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel: St John 14:8-17

Philip said to Jesus, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

A Reflection for the Feast of Pentecost

from Rev'd David Higgon

“Peace, I leave you my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid”.

Today we celebrate Pentecost, the day the Christian Church has its beginning. For us it is a day of joyful celebration but for Jesus’ disciples the day starts in darkness and fear. They are in hiding. The room where they are together is filled with dread– the door is locked for fear of the Jews, when suddenly there is a rushing of wind and what appears to be tongues of fire that rest on them. Their fear is replaced by joy as the Advocate, the Holy Spirit Jesus had promised he would send to them, now fills their hearts with joy, and they are aware that the Holy Spirit has gifted them with the ability to speak in other languages.

Jesus has left them his words of peace and now the Holy Spirit takes away their fears and enables them to share the peace of Christ with the world.

The peace of Christ is something we still crave for in our world. A peace that is more than an end to war and conflict. It is justice for the oppressed, it is the ability to live together in relationship with others, to live together in peace, where there is justice for all, and freedom from oppression. It is about honesty, it’s about being truthful, it is a peace for the whole of God’s creation.

The disciples are no longer on their own, they have been strengthened by the Holy Spirit to pass on to people the peace of Christ. And they do it with such a joyful exuberance that people think they are drunk. Have you noticed how on a very windy day young children seem more excitable, louder and noisier. On a windy day, a special energy seems to take hold of children. ‘As high as kites’ is one way to describe them. They rush and whirl round outside as if they really are being carried up into the air. Sometimes they shriek like gulls, with arms outstretched like wings. Can any of you remember feeling like that? I wonder if the disciples were as giddy as children on a windy day when the Holy Spirit swirled round them in the house that day – the day called Pentecost. Was that why they just had to get out into the streets? Was it one of the reasons people thought they were drunk?

The Holy Spirit is the ongoing presence of Jesus even when his physical presence has moved on. Jesus describes the Spirit as the one who 'will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you',

The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Jesus, it is the spirit of God, it is the spirit of God’s love for his creation, it is alive it is vibrant and how wonderful!

Jesus taught us that the most important thing we must do is to love God and love our neighbour. But we have to work out how to do that. The Holy Spirit guides us in how we live our own lives and how we can be people who try to bring peace into our world and with God's creation. I mentioned the other week how Vincent Van Gogh saw love as the driving force that inspired his work, perhaps it is an example of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us to see the world differently.

The classic folk tales of the British Isles were often used to pass on moral messages to children, and to warn them from straying and exploring dangerous places. What is fascinating is how stories change over time, and where the mora of the story also may change.

Take the English Fairy story of Goldilocks and the three bears. Goldilocks, a young golden-haired girl, is out walking in the forest when she comes upon a house and finding no one at home she breaks in. She seems to have no regard for other people's property. However, in the original story it was three male bears Instead of a family trio of father mother and baby, and the young girl was a poor old woman, with silver rather than golden hair, who ends up impaled on a steeple in St. Paul's churchyard. Clearly the early story demonstrated a sort of rough justice where the moral seems to be that if you steal you will come to a very sticky end.

In the better-known version, Goldilocks has stolen food, vandalised the furniture and has occupied some one's bed without asking. She doesn't wait around for justice, because she wouldn't expect the bears to give her a fair hearing, she wouldn't expect to receive justice from them. The bears are angry, and they too want justice; they want Goldilocks to pay the penalty for breaking into their house, stealing their food and vandalising their home. On the face of it, this seems to be a reasonable reaction but with the help of the Holy Spirit, can we see the story of Goldilocks and the three bears differently?

For example, how should we see this story if the bears are filled with the Holy Spirit? Imagine Goldilocks is a refugee from a war zone like Syria or Gaza; she is homeless and starving and Mr and Mrs Bear are wealthy people with plenty of everything. Where are the three bears and Goldilocks in terms of what Jesus taught about loving God and loving neighbour? – what would the peace that Jesus speaks of look like now?

If the Bear family are filled with the Holy Spirit, how would they respond to Goldilocks? What sort of Justice would they want for her? They would want her to be free from the fear of violence, they would care for her well-being, that she had shelter food clothes and access to medicine, they would pray for peace in the land that she was forced to run away from because of violence and war.

The Spirit helps us to live as Jesus wants all to live in relationship with others and with the whole of creation; to live with joyful exuberance like children on a windy day, and with a deeper sense of peace and justice that is not just for ourselves but is for others and for all living things who share our common home.