

Along the track

Pentecost

Once again we welcome Pentecost. Or do we? We know the story, how after the resurrection of Jesus, his followers were confused and lost. What are we supposed to do now? When anyone dies, we want them back, we want things the way they were. So they gathered together, locking themselves away, fearful, confused, not knowing what on earth to do. Yes, yes they did hear all that about “I will not leave you orphans” and “I will be with you always.” They heard him say so often, ‘do not be afraid’ and even ‘peace be with you, my peace I give you.’ Yes, he did say that the Father will send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. But that was then and this is now! So where is all that now in this time of anxiety and confusion?

We might even ask ourselves the same question about our here and now!

So it is quite a dramatic change when the Spirit comes to enliven and inspire them. From cowering away, they almost burst from that room, alive with the Spirit, ready to take on the world!! Bit too dramatic for us today? Not relevant to our lives? Perhaps that is not what is asked of us today, to go out into the highways, the streets, the cities to proclaim the message of Jesus in the way that they did. But something is asked of us. To keep the message of Jesus alive. And that has been true of every age, of every time since that first Pentecost. Our circumstances may be different but Pentecost gifts us with the same Spirit and asks something of us no matter the times.

That is what Pentecost is about. What is that gift, that ‘something’?

Paul tells the Galatians that ‘the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’. We are given these gifts at Baptism and at Confirmation. We have been given a good serving of that fruit. They are there within us to be used.

So which one or ones do you think you most need at the moment, which ones does your family need from you at this time, which ones might your community need from you?

I read recently that we live in time of restless unhappiness - not satisfied with our situation. Another described this time as an age of resentment. We are not satisfied with what we have and resent others for having it! If that is the case, what gifts of the Spirit do you think we need to offer that sort of world?

If you consider that list St Paul offers the Galatians, which ones can you see in yourself? Which ones do you think you might need to work on a bit more?

Spirituality writer Fr Ronald Rolheiser offers this example: *For example, if I enter a room and my person and presence radiate positive energy: trust, stability, gratitude, concern for others, joy in living, wit, and humor, that energy will affect everyone in the room and will remain with them after I have left the room, as the spirit that I leave behind. Conversely, even though my words might try to say the contrary, if my person and presence radiate negative energy: anger, jealousy, bitterness, lying, or chaos, everyone will sense that, and that negative energy will remain with them after I leave, coloring everything I have left behind.*

The gifts of the Spirit are not just abstract ideas but rather they are real and waiting to be used. They lie within each of us and they are given for a purpose, just as they were to those gathered in that room two thousand or so years ago. Their world was different and what was asked of them was different to how these gifts might change the world we live in today. But these gifts are needed just as much – our world still needs the joy of the Good News, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Inside each of us there awaits a wonderful gift of freedom that can open hearts that that are closed, where negative feelings have built barriers, a gift that believes in the goodness that lies within each of us, a gift that can bring joy to others, even in the dark times, a gift that brings kindness and generosity where jealousy and resentment have taken hold.

The gifts of the Pentecost Spirit come alive in each of us if we want them to.

Regards
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