

PENTECOST-2021

Acts 2:1-21

1Cor 3:3-7;12-13

Jn 20:19-23

St Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church at Pentecost with what sounded like wind and looked like fire, while St John describes Jesus bestowing this gift on the disciples at Easter when he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Both accounts are concerned with the disciples being commissioned to continue the mission of Jesus to proclaim God's salvation and grow his kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is described as the Comforter. The Spirit is the Comforter is one who comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable. The word 'comfort' comes from two Latin words, 'con and fortis,' which means 'with strength or power.' A comforter is not someone who makes us feel good so much as someone whose presence, strength and wise assurance can always be relied on.

At the beginning of the Ordinarate mass the priest prays that the Holy Spirit might inspire us. We are not praying that he might give us some bright ideas but that he will purify us by breathing in us. The Latin word 'spiro' means 'breath.' To inspire means to breathe in while expire means to breathe out. The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church is God's assurance that his empowering love and presence is always with us as he leads us to understand God's truth as we live as disciples of Christ and as his agents in the world.

It is no accident that St Luke's account of the coming of the Holy Spirit occurs at Pentecost. Pentecost is the Jewish festival of thanksgiving for the beginning of the wheat harvest. The harvest of God's kingdom began at Pentecost when Peter and the others poured out into the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming the good news of Jesus and the Resurrection and calling the people to repentance and baptism with the assurance of God's love and forgiveness. St Luke tells us that 3000 people became Christians that day. That wasn't bad considering the disciples had never attended a workshop on evangelism in their lives! They didn't need to learn a plethora of techniques, what they did was preach the gospel with convincing truth.

The first Christians preached to observant and not so observant Jews, to Greeks, pagans and those holding various philosophies. This is not very different to our situation today, but the solution must be the same. People, especially the young, need to be faced with the compelling challenge of the gospel of salvation. They are not looking for a watered-down gospel that compromises God's truth to make it more palatable. They don't want the Church to be an entertainment centre and they don't want it to be a lean and slick multi-national corporate institution that markets salvation. What I hear from young adults is, "All we want to be is to be good Catholics."

Preaching the gospel of repentance is no easy task in a culture that does not acknowledge that sin is real. No sin, so no need for repentance, and Christianity is only tolerated as a private matter or if it embraces the ideology of noisy progressives or operates purely as a welfare organisation.

The delegates who will attend the Catholic Church's Plenary Council this year need to listen to the Holy Spirit and write his truths on their hearts rather than pursuing their own factional agendas.

Despite all, today is a day of celebration because people are still choosing to be harvested into God's kingdom and are offering themselves for ordination, religious or lay ministry. There are young and old who are looking for stakes in the ground that give them direction and leadership. They don't want to be pampered, they want to be challenged.

Our mission is the same mission that began in Jerusalem on Pentecost Sunday. Are we up to it? Yes we are IF we listen carefully to what William Blake said in his poem 'Pentecost.'

*Unless the eye catch fire,
The God will not be seen.
Unless the ear catch fire
The God will not be heard.
Unless the tongue catch fire
The God will not be named.
Unless the heart catch fire,
The God will not be loved.
Unless the mind catch fire,
The God will not be known.*

Happy Pentecost.

Msgr Harry Entwistle
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