

News that salvation and eternal life are offered to all who give themselves to Jesus Christ.

Let me put this a different way: to serve Jesus as completely as we are each called to do, would be a total impossibility were it not for the fact that God Himself gives us a hand through the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit moves us; leads us; offers us insights and understanding into the truth of the Gospel; and opens up the Will of God for us to follow. The Holy Spirit gives us strength to resist temptation and courage to pattern our lives and thoughts on Jesus, our Head and our Master.

Now: I began these remarks by suggesting that Pentecost should be more about experience than about history. Pray God, that each one of us might become more open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit! Pray God that we might be so filled with vigour and with life that our praise to God the Father and of Jesus the Son might attract some attention! Pray God that the Holy Spirit in our midst might so fill us with that nurturing sense of being loved by God that our worship at His Altar would lift us to His nearer Presence, and our praise of His Name might complement and blend with that of the Angels and the Archangels and with all the Company of Heaven!

And pray that as the infilling of the Holy Spirit brought wonderful changes in the lives of the people of the early Church, so a fresh blowing of the Spirit in our midst might open us to new challenges and a renewed willingness to follow and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν

LECTIONS:

Acts 2.1-21; Psalm 104.25-35,37; 1 Corinthians 12.3b-13; +John 20.19-23

PENTECOST

2014-06-08

PARISH OF GEORGINA—S. GEORGE'S CHURCH, SUTTON

Unlike many of the days we celebrate in the Christian year, I'd like to think that the Feast of Pentecost is more about *experience* than about history. The events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles actually happened, to be sure, but the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit is a continuous series of events which happens in every generation. We pray for, and anticipate, the outpouring of the Spirit when we are baptized. If you were confirmed, you will remember that the Bishop laid hands upon your head and asked for a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you. And indeed, there are many times throughout our lives when we legitimately ask for—and *receive*—a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit in order that we might be empowered to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is an *experience*. To be bathed in the Holy Spirit is to be immersed in the sensation of being loved by God. It is to become energized with the energy and power of God within us. The experience convinces us that we have indeed a purpose in God's plan. What an experience for the Church! What an experience for those individuals who have sensed the Spirit awakening within them!

There's a very un-Anglican word which describes the resulting behaviour: *enthusiasm*. Did you know that enthusiasm is a theological term? Indeed it is, and it comes from two Greek words, *εν θεον*, meaning "God within". *Ενθουσιασμος* is the word. So the Pentecost experience, then, which resulted in such enthusiastic behaviour, was literally an "in-filling" of God as the Holy Spirit touched each person in that Upper Room.

Can you begin to imagine it? The disciples and their friends were at prayer only ten days after they had seen Jesus carried bodily into heaven. Scripture says that they *devoted themselves to*

prayer. This suggests to me that their prayer was fervent, intentional, yearning. They were being faithful because Jesus had taught them to be. They devoted themselves to prayer, waiting upon the Lord. And suddenly, everything changed! The sound of a mighty rushing wind: *terrifying!* The sight of tongues of fire resting briefly upon each person: think of the dramatic scene in the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as the Holy Spirit swirled around and touched each one. ...And such an outburst of praise and adoration issuing forth from each person that a crowd began to gather outside on the street, because of the commotion.

Perhaps the house with the upper room was situated on a quiet street like this—we don't know! But we *do* know that the tranquility of the street was so shattered by the utterances of God's praise that the resultant hubbub drew the attention of a great crowd. When was our worship so boisterous that a crowd gathered? Wouldn't that be something? And people began to conclude that the occupants of the Upper Room were drunk! But unlike most drunken behaviour, this had a focus: God's Name was being praised, loudly, *enthusiastically*, and in languages understood by every foreigner in the crowd.

Then something else happened. Remember S. Peter? Do you remember how he deserted Jesus on the night of His arrest and trial? Do you remember how it was Peter who everlastingly stood in the way of Jesus and the unfolding of God's plan of salvation? Before the resurrection he would have been hard-pressed to have been elected the Patron Saint of Klutzes, yet, after he had been touched by the Holy Spirit, it was this same Peter who addressed the crowd to explain what had happened, and who also taught them something about the Lord Jesus Christ!

You see, before the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus had promised the disciples that He would pray God the Father,

Who would send the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit. As part of His task, the Spirit would teach them all things and would also bring to remembrance all that Jesus had taught them. And here was Peter, filled with the Spirit, teaching exactly as Jesus had promised. In fact, He taught so convincingly that some three thousand souls were converted to Christ that very day! (*I wish...*)

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that first Christian Pentecost marked the birth of the Church as the Body of Christ militant here on earth. Beloved, that's *us!* We celebrate this day—hopefully with some enthusiasm!—because the arrival of the Holy Spirit enabled and empowered the small company of believers to begin their ministry of making disciples of all people. That's our work: yours and mine. Jesus promised that whoever believes in Him would continue to do His works, and indeed, that they would do even greater works because Jesus was going to the Father. The Pentecost experience was where this began, as those touched by the Holy Spirit began to be led by the Spirit to bear witness to Jesus.

That work continues to this day, as indeed it must continue to the end of time if the Gospel is to be proclaimed to all of God's people. And it continues, because, as Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, the Holy Spirit manifests Himself for the common good, giving each member of the community the particular talent, or gift necessary for the community to be able to work together for the spread of the Gospel. To be sure, we don't all possess the same gifts! I don't have your gifts and you don't have mine. Not everyone has spiritual discernment, the gift of healing, prophecy, tongues, or the like, yet within the community of the faithful—within this Parish of Georgina—these gifts *all* exist for God's use and for His greater glory. So God has equipped us—you and me—with every good gift necessary to continue believing, living, and spreading the Good