

A Gospel Reflection for Pentecost

The Gospel for today can be either John 14:15-16, 23-26 or John 20:19-23. In the first of these Jesus promises his followers that he will send a counsellor or advocate, the Holy Spirit who will dwell in their hearts. It is clear from what Jesus says that it is in and through the life of the Spirit that God is present in our lives. Moreover the Spirit will bring the disciples, and us, to a new understanding of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. In the alternative Gospel from John 20 we hear of Jesus' appearance to the disciples in the upper room on the evening of his resurrection. Jesus breathes his Spirit upon the disciples and tells them that as the Father has sent him so now he is sending them. As the Spirit was breathed into Adam and Eve at creation so now the Spirit is breathed into the followers of Jesus, making them a new creation. We call Pentecost the birthday of the Church because it is through the gift of the Spirit that the followers of Jesus are gathered into one body. Having been given a new understanding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus his followers are now sent out to be the ongoing visible presence of the Risen Jesus in the world. They are not simply to remind people about who Jesus was. Through the action and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives Jesus is again made present. The life and work, ministry and message of Jesus are ongoing. This is why speak of the church as being the body of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that makes one faith community, one body, one church out of a collection of followers.

This does not apply simply to the disciples. Through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation we too have been gifted with the Holy Spirit. We may not have heard rushing winds or seen tongues of fire as in the first reading (Acts 2:1-11) but the Spirit lives just as truly in the hearts of Jesus' followers today as in the time of the first disciples. Jesus' words to his disciples "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you" are said to us today. The call to be the ongoing visible presence of the Risen Lord in the world is our call too. But do we really believe this? Do we believe that through our daily lives, our families and work, our choices and actions, our struggles and challenges Jesus can be made present? If we allow the Word of God to shape our lives, our choices, values, words, relationships and actions then Jesus and his message are living realities in our lives and our world. We do not do this on our own. It is the action of the Spirit who lives in us. We are called to make space for that Spirit in our lives.

Spirit of Light, let the fire of your wisdom burn brightly within us.
Spirit of Silence, in the still moment may we be open to God's presence.
Spirit of Courage, dispel the fear that lingers in our hearts.
Spirit of Fire, engulf us with the passion of Christ's love.
Spirit of Peace, help us to be attentive to God's word in the world.
Spirit of Joy, enthuse us to proclaim aloud the Good News.
Spirit of Love, compel us to open ourselves to the needs of others.
Spirit of Power, bestow the gifts of your strength upon us.
Spirit of Truth, guide us to walk in the way of Christ.

(Taken from Prayer for Parish Groups by D. Harrington and J. Kavanagh)

FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Next Sunday is Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. The gospel speaks of the Spirit who will dwell in our hearts and bring us to a new understanding. Through the gift of the Spirit those who follow Jesus – you and I - are called together to be the body of Jesus Christ. If we allow the Word of God to shape our lives, our choices, values, words, relationships and actions then the Risen Jesus and his message are living realities in our lives and our world. We do not do this on our own. It is the action of the Spirit who lives in us. We are called to make space for that Spirit in our lives.

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