

Acts 2:1-11

Romans 8:8-17

John 14: 15-16, 23-26

Today's feast of Pentecost recalls how the first followers of Jesus overcame their fear, threw open the doors of their hiding places and burst out onto the world stage. It celebrates the continued presence of God's Spirit and power in the world. Pentecost links the stories of the first followers of Jesus with our own stories. By recalling the stories and experiences of the early Church we can reflect on how we can allow God's Spirit to be active in our own time.

Let's start by recalling the experience of those first followers of Jesus. They were all busy going about their lives when they were called by Jesus to follow him and learn a new way of living in love and peace which they were then to share with the whole world.

As they followed Jesus, they saw how his message made sense and could make a real difference in their troubled world. But then came the defining moment of their whole experience – the world tried to reject the message of Jesus by putting him to death. The disciples were terrified and lost. They all went into hiding.

But even in fear they clung to their faith and were gradually able to witness to the resurrection and the fact that nothing can destroy Jesus with his message of love and peace. Jesus had promised them that the Spirit of God would help them to carry on with their mission of preaching the good news to all people.

In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the world was divided by many different languages. With the help of the Holy Spirit the early Church was able to proclaim the message of Jesus to the

“devout people” of different nationalities and faiths living in Jerusalem in a language that they all understood.

Throughout the New Testament we are reminded, especially by St Paul, that we do not create the kingdom of God through our own efforts but by creating the conditions for the Spirit of God to be active and effective in the world

The disciples were open to the influence of the Spirit of God in their lives and it is this deep and mysterious reality that we celebrate today. It is when we are prepared to face our own fears and inadequacies that we can allow the Spirit of God to work in our lives.

Now let's focus on our own stories and the context in which they are taking place. Each of us has a unique story with challenges that are specific to us. But we share a similar context or backdrop to our unique stories. All of us here today feel attracted in some way by Jesus and his message. And many of us have the experience of a world that seems hostile to a message of peace and love. Different groups are shouting louder and louder using language that hurts and destroys. We might all appear to speak the same language but as a society we are failing to share meaning and feeling. We are often afraid in this environment to say that we are followers of Jesus and to preach his message of love and peace for all people. We fear being misunderstood and ridiculed. This is the starting point for our own Pentecost moment.

As Christians we believe that the Spirit of God hovers over creation as we are told in the book of Genesis. But the Spirit isn't something that we control. We have two choices – we can ignore it and remain locked in fear and hatred, or we can open ourselves to it and receive the strength and courage to proclaim the Gospel in the way the first disciples did.

In the Second Vatican Council the Holy Spirit gave the Church the strength and courage to throw open the doors of its hiding places and take the message of Jesus out to people of good will everywhere. The Council distilled the wisdom and experience of centuries and articulated it in a way that makes sense in our time.

Just as the disciples proclaimed the message of Jesus...

...to devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven... in a language that they all understood.

So today we are urged by the Church to reach out to...

... all people of good will everywhere and work with them to promote the message of peace and love that opens the world to the influence of God's Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is constantly active in our World but we can so easily obstruct this activity without realising it. It is not for us to label our own personal ideals and aspirations as the work of the Holy Spirit and then try to force others to follow them. No, our task is to prepare the ground for the Spirit to work by engaging with all people of good will to sow the seeds of peace and love in the world. We can only do this by rejecting all expressions of hatred and intolerance.

Each one of us has to discern in our own life where we need to challenge and eradicate the language of hatred and sow the seeds of love and peace. We then need to be open to the Holy Spirit and trust that the Spirit of God will do exactly as Jesus promised and “transform the face of the earth”.