

Drunk ?

12 6 11

God, who at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of you Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and ever more to rejoice in his holy comfort.

My text today is from the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 and verse 15, words spoken by St Peter on that first Day of Pentecost to a crowd in a street in Jerusalem some of whom thought the apostles were inebriated: 'Indeed they are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.'

How do you know when something is true or not ? Usually we use a rule of thumb: the evidence before our eyes tells us something which in the light of experience makes sense to us. A week ago last Saturday, for example, when I saw cucumbers were on promotion at Intermarché and only costing 40 centimes, then I knew immediately why they were so cheap. The German e coli scare had now reached Brittany !

When the Jews in the street where the Upper Room was situated heard the apostles speaking in tongues, some foreign Jews in Jerusalem for the pilgrim festival of Shavuot, fifty days after Pesach, heard what they thought were Galileans

speaking in their own native tongue: Greek, Arabic, Latin while others only heard gibberish, something approximating the speech of someone who has had too much new wine to drink !

What made sense to some was complete nonsense to others. So Peter on cue steps up to explain. First, common sense. His friends are not drunk. How can they be it's only 9.00a.m., far too early for the pubs to be open ? Second, a reference to scripture. Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, a passage about the end times, the last days when God 'will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh'. What Joel foresees is an extraordinary time, a time when

'Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men will see visions
And your old men will dream dreams.'

It will be a time when 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'
Exciting or what ? Extraordinary, certainly. Exciting times to be living through !

For me, from today's reading from Acts, two points seem clear and are worth noting.

Firstly, that the Holy Spirit is not always appreciated and understood. Here he is clearly inspiring the Apostles to share their joy about the risen Lord Jesus who has not abandoned them but who is with them through the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It is a message some folk can understand; it is something others think is nonsense. The difference is that for some what is said chimes with their experience while to others it seems gobbledygook! It is a tenet of our belief that

the Holy Spirit is with us as Christians. We receive the Holy Spirit at our Baptism then again at our Confirmation and even before we take that first step to take our faith seriously, the Holy Spirit is alongside us, gently encouraging us to open our eyes and to ask questions. For us as Christians, it is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity who is most fully with us as we try to live a Christian life and to grow in faith. It is the fruit of the Spirit (love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; self-control) which are the marks of Christian maturity; and the gifts of the spirit are just one way through which our lives are enriched (counsel; fear of the Lord; fortitude; piety; understanding; wisdom; knowledge).

And the second, that potentially all can be saved. I believe Christianity is a universal path to salvation and that all can be saved. Which is not the same as saying all will be saved since, as in everything, I think each one of us does have a choice in the matter!

So let me leave you with this thought what to some sounds like the words of babbling drunk to others can be true words spoken in the language of their heart How we interpret anything is a pretty personal choice – rather like whether we choose to eat cucumbers!

I have spoken in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

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