

At peace

19 5 13

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

Our text today is taken from John chapter 14 and verse 27:

'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.'

Do you ? Do you feel at peace ? Are you at peace in yourself, with yourself ? To be at peace, to enjoy an inner calm at the centre of our being, is one of the great promises that Jesus is making to his disciples, hours before their lives will be turned upside down and irrevocably changed forever by his arrest, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into heaven – then today by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Peace, in this sense of the word, does not mean lack of external conflicts. It does not mean lack of effort on our part or lack of challenge in our lives. Here I think the peace which Jesus talks about is a calm at the core of our being, rooted in the fact that we are centred, that we are sure of who we are and what we are and with what we are being called to do, at ease in and with ourselves.

So why at heart can we as Christians be at peace ? Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. You are all familiar with the story of the Day of Pentecost which Luke recounts in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The disciples and the Blessed Virgin Mary are praying in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit descends on them with the sound of a rushing wind and in the form of tongues of fire that alights on each one of them and gives them the energy to rush out into a crowded Jerusalem street to witness to the truth and joy of the resurrection.

If then we can be at peace because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, what then is his effect on us ? How does the Holy Spirit affect our lives ?

The key may be in four verbs, doing words, because that is what the Holy Spirit does, he moves us on. The four verbs are energise; inform; inspire; enthuse.

Energise – to give energy. Great word and neatly illustrated by the sound of a rushing wind and tongues of fire. Heat energy and wind energy, both symbols of the spiritual energy that the Holy Spirit can generate by his presence in our lives, by our being in touch with him. He gives us the get up and go to get up and go and get on with what we are being called to do.

Inform – to give knowledge and understanding, to give shape. From an early age, we become familiar with the Christian story. Over time, we come to understand it better. But a moment of clarity comes when a light goes on in our mind and the pieces of a familiar jigsaw fit together as a clear picture to us. That moment of

enlightenment, when what we know makes personal sense to us is the action of the Holy Spirit working in us. And once we have real understanding, who we are is changed forever. Real learning, true learning, not only shapes our behaviour but it also shapes who and what we are

Inspire – to motivate to do, to breathe. One of the joys of being a teacher is the possibility of our inspiring our pupils, challenging them to achieve and to discover their true vocation in life. That’s precisely what the Holy Spirit does to us. He calls us to find and fulfil our particular calling – to be the people of God and to serve God our Father in our individual ways. The root of the word ‘inspire’ is the notion of breathing, breath so necessary and vital a part of life. It is our in-breathing of the Holy Spirit that provides the inspiration, the motivation to act.

Enthuse – en theos, the presence of God in our lives; to connect us with God, to put us in touch with God so that we can feel and sense an Otherness in us and with us, up close and personal in our lives. Of course, God by definition is everywhere but the question is ‘are we awake to his presence?’ That’s what the Holy Spirit does – he wakes us up to what is there – God. He is the connection, the connector to the divine – opening our eyes to the fact that we are not alone.

So that is why we can be at truly at peace. Yes, of course, there will be all sorts of chaos and confusion, noise and challenge, swirling around us but, at heart, we can be centred and at peace because of the presence in our lives of the Holy Spirit who energises, informs, inspires and enthuses us. We can do because he does. And may that be true for all us today and always.

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

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermon 27 : At peace

