

## In the Spirit

4 6 17

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 this morning may be found in the opening verse of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

**‘When the day of Pentecost had come . . .’**

Once more in the Christian calendar, we have reached the Day of Pentecost, Whit Sunday, when we come together to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples, soon to be apostles, had come together in Jerusalem to pray in the Upper Room with Mary, the mother of Jesus. The stillness and quiet of the room was suddenly broken, not by the sound of voices raised in prayer but by what sounded like the rush of a strong wind, a sound that seemed to fill the whole house where they were. Then, in the room where they were sat, they saw what looked like tongues of fire which divided up and settled on each one of them. Shock, surprise, delight in personally being touched by the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit who seemed to be in touch with each person present. And, as a result, each one of them was gifted with the ability to speak in other

languages. Extraordinary, out of the blue, the promise that Jesus had made to them just ten days before was being realised in part by the presence of the Holy Spirit who enabled them to speak in ways previously unknown to them.

Out in the street, each one of them began to speak to people passing by, some of whom were Jews on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of Shavuot, just six weeks on from Passover. Some of these strangers came from different corners of the Roman Empire where they spoke or could understand foreign languages: Greek, Egyptian, Latin, Parsee and to them, to their ears, what the disciples were saying seemed to be in their own languages. Now whether this was literally so or whether in fact the disciples were actually speaking in tongues, glossolalia if you want the theological term, what matters is they understood what was being said to them and recognised the enthusiasm with which it was expressed.

But there were some there who didn't – some who thought what they heard was gobbledegook, nonsense, mishuganah, the drunken ravings of madmen. It makes me smile that even at this wonderful moment when the Spirit was being outpoured on the people of God, there were the cynics in the street, deaf to the word of God and ready to dis those who were giving tongue to the excitement of being touched by Him.

But Peter explains perhaps with a wry smile that it's too early in the morning to be drunk, it's only nine o'clock and in fact what they are witnessing is the fulfilment of the words of the prophet Joel: the time when the Spirit of God will be outpoured on the people of God, a sign that of the time they have all been waiting

for when 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' – well exciting or what ?

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a fact of life for all Christians. We are blessed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our baptism. We are anointed by his presence at our Confirmation. His presence in our lives is part of our everyday experience as Christians. The Holy Spirit can inform us, inspire us, encourage us. He can shape our lives. He can challenge us to be the people God intends us to be. He can give us the courage and energy and self-confidence to be and act as Christians. But, as always, we do have a choice. We don't have to respond to his presence or promptings. We can choose to close our eyes and shut our ears and get on with what we do, happy to ignore our friend who loves us and wants us to be part of the Christian family and play our part to the full.

So I trust that we as a church here at St Bart's are happy to be gifted in so many different ways by the fact of the Holy Spirit in our lives and that, strengthened by him, we may truly be children of God.

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

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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