

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson 28th May 2023 – Pentecost

Readings (Year A): 1st: Acts 2:1-11 'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak'.
2nd: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13. 'In the one Spirit we were all baptised'. Sequence: Veni, sancte Spiritus. **Gospel:** John 20:19-23. 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you: receive the Holy Spirit'.

St John celebrates the coming on the Holy Spirit on the first day of the new age, the day of Christ's resurrection.

St Luke, in our 1st reading from Acts, sets the story of the Holy Spirit on the 50th day, Pentecost.

John writes of the Holy Spirit in the context of Easter, the first day of the week, the beginning of the new age when the human race is raised to new life. The Spirit is bestowed upon the disciples, and they are co-opted into the mission of Jesus Christ. It is the day of their commissioning. In the power of the Holy Spirit, they are sent out as harvesters into the fields of the world.

Luke, however, writes out of a different perspective to John. He sets the coming of the Spirit in the context of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the fiftieth day.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest feast and followed on fifty days after the feast of Unleavened Bread. In the fields the harvest was now completed, and Pentecost celebrated the solemn offering of the harvest fruits to God.

In the symbolic use of numbers, the fiftieth day marks the beginning of a new age after the completion of seven weeks, a fulness of time. The end of one period is always the beginning of another.

When the grain is harvested, the work of the reaper is completed, but the task of the miller has just begun.

As Jesus completed his mission, the task of the church was just beginning. He set the wheels in motion. He breathed on the disciples and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'

On that day the words of the psalmist attained a new meaning: 'You send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the earth.'

How does this new breathing of the Spirit change and renew? What are the fruits of this new life?

On Pentecost Sunday it is good to remind ourselves of both the Gifts and the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The Sevenfold Gifts are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear (awe) of the Lord. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them

The Fruits of the Spirit, are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us, having received the Gifts, as the first fruits of eternal glory.

The Tradition of the Church lists twelve of them: **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.** The Gifts are what 'come in,' the Fruits what we should produce.

St Antony of Padua wrote: 'A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks several languages. These several languages are the various ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, obedience and patience, with which we speak when we practise them towards our neighbour. Language comes alive when it speaks by deeds. Enough of talking let actions speak. Actions speak louder than words.'

In the power of the Spirit there is a clear conviction that goodness is greater than evil.
The hurts and malice of life are overcome by the greater power of the fruits of the Spirit.

John is correct in celebrating the coming of the Spirit as the first day of the new age of renewed humanity.

But equally, Luke is correct in celebrating the presence and power of the Spirit on the fiftieth day, the day of blessing God for the harvest fruits.

In the eyes of God a thousand years are as a single day, so it is a futile search trying to pinpoint a precise moment or day for the Spirit's coming.

John and Luke both give us valuable insights.

The day of the Spirit cannot be tied down: for the work of the Spirit is as free as the wind.

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

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