

Pentecost Sunday

The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost morning was accompanied by several significant signs. Firstly, *“there came from heaven a sound like a rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”* Secondly, *“divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”* And thirdly, at the very moment when *“they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”*, the apostles *“began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”* These signs are highly symbolic. A rushing wind stirs things up and blows things around. Since the day of the resurrection the apostles appear to have hidden themselves away in the upstairs room which they had hired for the feast of the Passover. On Pentecost Sunday this rushing wind shakes them out of their lethargy and their fears, blasting them into the public arena and causing them to find their feet as evangelists, preachers and missionaries. Likewise, the divided tongues of fire, which emanated from one common source and *“rested on each one of them”*, indicates that the apostles were fired up with love for the work of taking the good news of Jesus to the waiting crowds. This love melted away their timidity and fears and made them courageous in the face of hostility and opposition. And finally, the gift *“of utterance”* and the ability *“to speak other tongues”* indicate that the previously silent apostles had found their voice and their conviction to fulfil the final commission of Jesus *“to go and make disciples of nations.”*¹

St Paul, in our second reading, reminds us that the Holy Spirit is given not just to the apostles but *“to everyone”* - and given *“for the common good”*. And that gift of the Holy Spirit is manifested in many different ways. Indeed, the Christian community is blessed by the richness and variety of the gifts that the Holy Spirit brings. And these gifts are complimentary and mutually enriching in the same way that the many parts of a human body complement each other to make *“one body.”* All of us receive the Holy Spirit in one form or another and St Paul tells us that while *“there are varieties of gifts”* they are always from *“the same Spirit.”* And while *“there are varieties of service”* they are always for *“the same Lord”*. And *“there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.”* But whatever the gifts we receive we should not hide them away or sit on them as the apostles did before Pentecost day, but we should be full of conviction and love, moved by the rushing wind and fire of the Holy Spirit.

So today we celebrate the great feast of the Holy Spirit – the feast of Pentecost; the feast which transformed the Christian Church and brought it alive and the feast which should transform each and every one of us ensuring that we are all truly alive!

¹ Matt 28: 19