

# Reflections for 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

## Whit Sunday - Pentecost

This Sunday is Whit Sunday or Pentecost. It marks the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples after Jesus had ascended to heaven. The reading describing that first whit Sunday is in the Acts of the Apostles. It says that the Apostles were all sitting in a house when there was a great sound and a violent wind filled the house. Tongues of fire rested on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples had been highly depressed when Jesus was crucified and they were full of fear for the future. That desperation was turned to joy at the discovery of Jesus' resurrection but that joy was no doubt rather lessened by Jesus announcing that he was going to leave them although Jesus had promised them that the Holy Spirit would come to them after he was gone. I rather think they would have been less than enthusiastic having with the idea of the Holy Spirit instead of the real person of Jesus, but that was the promise they had to accept. We should also bear in mind it is a promise that applies to us now as clearly Jesus could not still be living 2000 years later.

Now we come to that dramatic event announcing the arrival of the Holy Spirit. Despite the event apparently happening in a house, people from about Jerusalem heard the sound and came to find out what it was all about. Jerusalem was then, as it is now, full of people visiting from far and wide all having a language of their own from where they lived but they could all understand what was being said in their own language. The reading does not say exactly what was being said other than that they were speaking of "God's deeds of power". The talk was sufficiently difficult that some said they were drunk which led to Peter's first sermon to the people. Peter was a fisherman not a public orator, but he was enabled to speak with authority and persuasion to the not very supportive crowd. In passing, I remember the first time I preached at Great Brickhill being rather nervous and wondering what people would think about it. The Holy Spirit gives us strength to do things we are not comfortable with, perhaps that is a reason the Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the Comforter.

There are other references to the Holy Spirit coming on new converts but none of them talk about such a dramatic event as is described at the first Pentecost. We believe that those who have been baptised have the benefit of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the apostles and receiving the Holy Spirit did not come with such a mighty wind or sound. On the occasion people were enabled to speak about God's power and we should be able to express our beliefs to anyone with the help of the Holy Spirit. We are not alone when it comes to saying what we believe to friends and neighbours.

Jeremy Hopkinson, LLM

Heavenly father, help us to feel the power of your Holy Spirit when we are nervous and unsure of what we should be saying or doing. May we remember Peter as a fisherman speaking to the public and be strengthened to follow his example. Amen.

Bible readings: Acts 2: 1-8, 12-18; Romans 8: 22-27; John 15: 26-27

Story: 'The Helper Arrives' (based on Pentecost: Acts 2)