

Sunday 8 June 2025

Liverpool Parish Church

Pentecost

NT: Acts 2:1-21

NT: Romans 8:14-17

Gp: John 14:8-17

There are various descriptions and names for the Holy Spirit. In the reading today from Acts, the Spirit appears as a violent wind and then tongues of fire. Powerful, ferocious images, a force to be reckoned with. At the baptism of Jesus, when the Father speaks, then the Holy Spirit appears as a dove hovering over the emerging Christ.

In John's gospel, Jesus refers to the Advocate, the spirit of truth. This same Holy Spirit is known too as the Paraclete. Not a word in everyday use, unless perhaps you happen to be Greek. The literal translation is 'someone who is called to come alongside someone else'. It is this description that I think we need most at the moment in a world where power and greed seem to be prevailing, where anger is barely suppressed, where caring and concern for others appear to be diminishing.

In this world, where we are called to shine as beacons of hope, to stand for the truth no matter how hard that may be to tell out, to preach the gospel of love and understanding, it is a comfort to know that we have received this gift beyond words,

that the love shared between the Father and the Son has to come to each one of us as the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the one who is called to come alongside us throughout our lives.

There, no matter what we face, there, in times of hardship and of joy, there, when all is well and when all feels like misery. As a child, I thought the Holy Ghost was some sort of shadowy figure draped in a sheet, there to spy on me and to make sure I was behaving! But I was wrong, the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, is our travelling companion throughout this world, ensuring that we safely come at last to the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in heaven. It is that gift of support which give us confidence, that opens our hearts to God's will, that enables us to live a full and fruitful life.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we find the disciples still locked in the upper room, feeling lost without Jesus to guide them but also beginning to understand as they reflect on all that has happened and the meaning of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, men like Peter who were once fearful of the religious authorities, who denied Jesus, are now able to shout out the good news to all who will listen.

Peter tells of the ministry of Jesus, of his teaching and miracles, he tells of how Jesus was handed over to be crucified and how God raised him to new life on the third day and set him in his rightful place at God's right hand when he ascended.

Finally with the audacity that can only come from the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter declares openly:

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

This gift of the Holy Spirit is given to us as truly as it was given to the disciples that first Pentecost. This gift of 'someone who is called to come alongside someone else'. This gift which not only unites us with God, it also unites us with each other, calling each one of us to be a paraclete, an advocate for our brothers and sisters.

As the poet Kahlil Gibran says:

Thou art my brother because you are a human, and we both are sons of one Holy Spirit; we are equal and made of the same earth.

You are here as my companion along the path of life, and my aid in understanding the meaning of hidden Truth. You are a human, and, that fact sufficing, I love you as a brother.

As God, through the Holy Spirit, walks with us, as he feels our pain and shares our joys so we are called to do the same for all our brothers and sisters, regardless of any definition that humanity chooses to impose because we are all children of God, set free to cry Abba, Father, set free from the slavish bonds of sin, set free from doubt and despair.

We have been given a gift, which like any other gift, is only purposeful if it is used and the purpose of this gift is to reflect God's glory, to sew our own thread in the tapestry of his kingdom by being there for our brothers and sisters, by walking together, companions in need and plenty. In turn, listening and acting as required,

speaking truth in love, treating everyone with respect and dignity and giving thanks to God for the blessings he bestows through all those whom we meet, even if at times, it feels more like a burden than a blessing.

We will never fully understand the depth of the gift we have received in the Holy Spirit until we come to stand before God at the last. As Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians:

Then I shall know, as fully as I am known

But I hope we can join with the poet, Gibran when he says:

I came to live in the glory of love and the light of beauty, which are the reflections of God.

Revd Michelle Montrose