

**Pentecost Sunday
31 May 2009**

**Church of the Ascension, Hilton
Nic Denny-Dimitriou**

Collect for Pentecost (prayed together)

Readings for Pentecost:

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Psalm 104: 26-36

Acts 2: 1-21

John 15: 26-27 and John 16: 4(b) – 15

Introduction

Pentecost is a wonderful day in the Christian year, as important to celebrate as Easter and Christmas.

On this day we remember the time when, just after Jesus' Ascension, the followers of Jesus experienced God's presence coming to them in the form of wind and fire. Pentecost was also the day that the church was born; God's Spirit filled the disciples and made them brave enough to share the message of God's love with others. When they told others about Jesus, many people wanted to be baptised and follow His teachings too, and the pattern has continued in all its variations to this day.

Today we celebrate Pentecost and honour the Holy Spirit coming to God's People. Scripture teaches us that the Church, the People of God, is the Body of Christ. But without God's Spirit in us, we are lifeless and dead.

On the day of Pentecost Jesus' disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach and proclaim, to serve and to love. God gives us the Holy Spirit today that we may do the same.

Let us pray:

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God our Father

When your Son ascended into heaven

He promised to send us the Holy Spirit:

Grant that we, who have not been left as orphans

May live always in that Spirit

And be loving and obedient disciples of your Son;

Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit

One God, now and forever

☺ **My people, my dear people...**

There is much that I must still teach you, much of importance about God, the world and how to live in this life. I wish I could teach you all...

... to speak Greek. After all, it is God's own language. Now some think God's language is Hebrew, and others think it is Latin (now Italian), or Arabic. But we know it is Greek!

Lately I have been teaching Andy. We go occasionally for Coffee at a Greek café and Manolis the owner greets me, "Kalimera, Pater Nikolas" [Good morning, Father Nicholas] and offers a Greek coffee on the house – the kind that would make the hair on my head stand up... in theory, if I had much ☺

[Demonstrate whilst speaking]

Hands – always used

Couldn't speak if had to sit on one's hands

Don't know

Dismiss what I don't agree with

Various

Rolls of the shoulder (nuanced – depends on facial expression etc.)

Two hands movement

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Verbal communication – small percentage of all communication

It is said that as much as 80% is non-verbal

Therein is a story of our lives. What we do / how we live is vastly more important than what we say. Words are an essential means of communication therefore I am not dismissing them – even as I am using them now. They convey meaning, vision, thoughts, emotion, ideas, experience... But so do the actions of our lives and the way we live

Perhaps like the 80 / 20 split in communications generally

[Tho' I wouldn't try to give a %age to it]

### **How does that tie up with Pentecost?**

One major aspect... will elaborate

Amongst many aspects of the activity of God's Spirit:

- Spirit points to God
- Points us to Jesus
- Gives witness to God's actions / God's grace
- Prophets and teachers

God = the original life-giver

Force of the Universe

["May the force be with you" is not only applicable to Star Wars fans ☺]

### **Psalm 104**

Whole psalm highlights God's creative acts – makes for a wonderful read  
Suggestion throughout that it is God who holds together the atoms and DNA of all matter. Creator, sustainer, the one who has put it all in motion. If God withdraws breath, death follows; yet the same spirit renews the face of the earth; the Spirit of God creates

### **Ezekiel**

God's Spirit as the Life-restorer

Vision of the bones brought back to life - Powerful imagery

Without the presence of God, all would be like those dry bones (discuss image)

Picture of individuals, of the church, of groups, of humanity – at times, like those dry bones needing renewed life

We make much of relationship with God – God as Father / Creator / Heavenly Parent, and with Jesus – the Son – the “God with us” concept of “Emmanu-el”

But equally important: Relationship with the Spirit – the life-force breathed on us / into us

If humanity is created in the image of God, then we bear something very precious – however imperfect and however marred and scarred by our sin

Nothing deeper / richer / more fulfilling than living in harmony with God – a sense of living in harmony with God's Spirit

Much about God is mystery. Yet Jesus came to de-mystify God to some extent. Speaking of the Spirit, Jesus said the Spirit – also referred to as the Comforter – would come in a newly powerful way after the Ascension of Christ – Jesus said the Spirit would lead us into truth about God, and the truth about sin, and righteousness

### **Invoke on our lives**

Invite us to invoke the presence of God's Spirit

Greater measure

“Like earthen jars with cracks, we leak and need topping up”

As disciples of Jesus we have this privilege of being in harmony with God, recognising our constant need of God's grace

How we live is vitally important. Live as people “alive to God”, aware of God's presence in us and in the world, aware of God's presence in others, of the common and God-given humanity of all people incl. those we dislike, despise or regard as very different from us

Live lives conscious of God's values, which are often at odds with those of society around us, and if we are honest enough to recognise it, also at odds with some of our own values or selfish desires

As we learn to live in harmony with God's Spirit, we will also communicate that – sometimes in how we speak, and always in the way that we live

How we live is critical, in the same way that we can convey a huge amount not so much by our words as by our actions, using the light-hearted analogy I gave at the start of my sermon this morning.

God's Spirit enables us to live lives, vitally aware of God, and to be (become / be transformed into) the best that God made us to be, using the gifts and abilities that God gave us individually and together, witnessing by our lives to the Grace of God – reflecting that Grace to one another in our dealings with each other

**Invoke in worship / for our lives:** (elaborate esp. re liturgy)

- Throughout worship, in praise of God (Trinitarian)
- As lead-in to confession, the Collect for Purity “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit”
- In prayer (God's Spirit speaks through us as we pray)
- Communion prayer (not just one word – whole prayer – on the elements of wine and bread)
- And as we go from here, in the sense of how we will live our lives, asking to be empowered by God's spirit

**Paul Tillich** writes of the Divine Spirit as "God present to our spirit", God present in communities and personalities, grasping them, inspiring them and transforming them. In a sermon titled "Spiritual Presence" he lists some of the ways in which God's Spirit is available to our spirits:

- The Spirit can work in you with a soft but insistent voice telling you that there are chances of a new life waiting before the door of your inner self...
- The Spirit can give you the courage that says 'yes' to life in spite of the destructiveness that you have experienced around you and within you...
- The Spirit can awaken you to sudden insight into the way you must take your world, and it can open your eyes to a view of it that makes everything new...
- The Spirit can create warmth in the coldness you feel within you and around you...
- The Spirit can give you the power of prayer...
- The Spirit is always an expression of God's love for us, opening us to renewed life for ourselves and compassion for others.

[Anointing with oil on way to communion – sign of openness to Spirit]