

Pentecost Sunday

Today we celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church; a church born in frailty and weakness. It had no property, no money – its only resource was people - people like you and me, and there were not many of them! They knew each other's names. However, although the church was small in numbers, they were united in prayer; the church is sustained by the people who form the community of faith - whether large or small.

As we listened to the readings this morning, it would be very easy to get carried away with the special effects of Pentecost; the flames, the wind, and the speaking of different languages. However, we would miss the point if that was all we heard.

What about the underlying story? How does Pentecost fit into our Christian journey today? We have to think back fifty days to the arrest, trial, execution, and resurrection of Jesus. These events all took place at the time of the celebration of the Passover, which is the remembering of, and honouring of, God's rescue of the people of Israel from slavery. Fifty days ago we too were freed from slavery; the slavery of death, of fear, of failure, of loneliness, of rejection, through the death and resurrection of Christ.

Jesus offered His gift of Peace on the very night when all hell was about to break loose. But Jesus knew Satan was powerless against Him. His Peace was from the Holy Spirit, deep within Him.

We too have the same access to His presence, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the first Christians had. As we look around our St Luke's community of faith gathered here today, we also are bonded together through the love of God and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit; bonded by the language of peace, reconciliation, love and hope. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, people of different backgrounds learn to profess one faith to the praise and glory of God. This is the miracle of Pentecost, and it is a miracle which, through the grace of God, still happens today.

Over the years the church has had its problems and set-backs; but it is still being built through the proclamation of the Gospel, and part of it is assembled here this morning. We have gathered as friends, not rivals. We have come together as one family of God. Here we have the simplicity of the Gospel; we are a group of disciples listening to the Word of God.

Jesus is not a vague memory of someone who lived many years ago. He is a real life-giving presence that transforms us. Nowhere do we feel so close to Him as when we receive His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. At that moment we are in holy communion with him, and we are nourished with His peace and love.

Amen.

References: F.McCarthy and S.O'Flynn