

*'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.'* (Acts 2, Chapter 2)

The 24th of May will mark the Day of Pentecost which comes fifty days after Easter Day and brings the season to an end (the word Pentecost which comes from the Greek word for 'fiftieth' has its roots in the Jewish 'Feast of Weeks'). It is a major feast of the Church's year when Christians recall how God's Holy Spirit was given to the disciples after Jesus' Ascension, empowering them to begin the work of making disciples of all nations. It essentially marks the next crucial stage in the life of the new Church.

Jesus had promised his followers that, although they would not see him after his Ascension, they would receive the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire them. The Acts of the Apostles describes how the crowds gathered in Jerusalem - representing many nationalities and speaking many languages, were able to hear the disciples preaching in their own language.

The colour most often associated with Pentecost is red, representing the tongues of fire which the Acts of the Apostles describes appearing above the heads of the disciples as a sign that they had received the Holy Spirit. The mitre worn by a Bishop on his or her head symbolizes the 'tongues of fire' that descended upon the apostles at Pentecost.

Popular symbols of the Holy Spirit, include the dove or flames, symbols of the church such as Noah's Ark and the pomegranate, or especially within Protestant churches of Reformed and Evangelical traditions, words rather than images naming for example, the "gifts" and "fruits" of the Spirit. Red flowers at the altar or pulpit, and red flowering plants such as geraniums around the church are also typical decorations for Pentecost services.

With its focus on God's Spirit being poured out on believers, Pentecost is one of the most popular days for baptisms and confirmations in the Church's year. In Christian tradition, this event represents fulfilment of the promise that Christ will baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit. Out of the four New Testament gospels, the distinction between baptism by water and the baptism

by Christ with "Holy Spirit and fire" is only found in Matthew and Luke.

In June we will be welcoming Bishop Barry to lead our Confirmation service which will be held at Holy Cross Gilling. However, it is not too late to be confirmed and experience a wonderful event as the Bishop anoints each candidate and prays for the Holy Spirit to come upon them and enter their lives in a new and powerful way. If that is something you would like, please get in touch with me. For all of us may this prayer give us hope, encouragement and peace.

*“Defend, O Lord, these your servants with your heavenly grace, that they may continue yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more until they come to your everlasting kingdom. Amen.” (Prayer said at Confirmation)*