

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2026. Pentecost. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling

When we think of Pentecost, most of us probably think of the famous account of it in the Acts of the Apostles, when we are told of the “sound like the rush of a violent wind”; the tongues of fire resting on the apostles; and those apostles speaking miraculously in other languages. Some people today can be a bit wary of the Day of Pentecost. It seems disturbing and we don’t like being disturbed, do we? But today’s Gospel reading offers us a very different Pentecost – quieter, but no less important. Because it shows us that the Holy Spirit comes to us in a wide variety of ways, and often *not* in a way that is as disturbing, dramatic or obvious as what happened on the famous Day of Pentecost. We read that Jesus came and stood among them and offered them peace. He breathed on them, saying: “*Receive the Holy Spirit.*” And he sent them out of that room on a mission, saying: “*As the father has sent me, so I send you.*” This is the Pentecost-moment, when the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples, but very different from the events that will take place fifty days later. It is a much quieter, and less dramatic, Pentecost.

I suspect that for many of us, this is closer to how we experience the Holy Spirit: God coming to us in an hour of need, when we are lost, scared, and confused when the Holy Spirit, comes not like the rush of a disturbing wind, but in a still, small voice, offering the gift of peace, in the quiet of an anxious moment. Jesus comes to us all, through the Holy Spirit, in a quiet, subtle way; maybe through a note or call from a friend, or through a song that we hear, or through a coincidence that we know is more than a coincidence. It may be through a Scripture passage we come across that is just what you needed to read or hear at that time. It can be through any number of quiet, subtle occurrences in our day, that tell us that the Holy Spirit is active in our midst. These quiet Pentecost-moments

remind us that Jesus really is fulfilling his promise to be with us always, and that God's presence in our lives is very real, even though it is often not very dramatic.

These Pentecost moments can be missed, of course. We must pay attention; watch and listen with the eyes and ears of faith, slow down and above pray and discover ways in our life to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit all over again. Jesus tells us earlier in John's gospel that the Holy Spirit is like the wind. We can't see the wind; we can only see its effects, and that's true of the Holy Spirit, most of the time, for most of us. We can't see the Holy Spirit. But when we pay attention, we can see His effects. We can see the difference that God is making in our life through the promised Holy Spirit. We discover that Pentecost-moments take place all the time, in more ways than we can possibly imagine. God is very much alive and active in our world, through the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our world has become deeply multicultural, and nowhere is this more visible than in the great cities around the world. Yet in many ways, this reality is not new. The first reading for today's feast of Pentecost already paints a remarkably similar, international scene. Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims from across the known world. Though united by their Jewish faith, they spoke different languages and carried within them very different cultural identities shaped by distant lands. Yet something extraordinary happens when the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles. Suddenly, the divisions that normally separate people fall away. The miracle of Pentecost is not that everyone suddenly speaks identically, but that within their differences a deeper unity becomes possible. The Holy Spirit does not erase diversity; He transfigures it into communion, makes it divine. Different voices become one proclamation. Perhaps this is one of the great lessons of Pentecost for us today. We live in a fragmented world, often divided by politics, race, culture, ideology, and fear.

Yet the Holy Spirit continues to move quietly through humanity, drawing people together in ways the world alone cannot achieve. The Church herself is meant to become a living image of this Pentecost reality: many nations, many languages, many stories, yet one in Christ.

When Jesus breathed on the disciples in the upper room, and gave them the Holy Spirit, he also said to them: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Jesus gave them - and us - the Holy Spirit so that we could carry on his mission. We are given the Holy Spirit to go - in whatever way that we can right now - to be witnesses of God’s life, unity and love and to offer encouragement, strength, and hope to others. Thanks be to God. Amen.