

Gracious God - breathe your Spirit into us so that we may hear and in hearing be led where you want us to go. Amen.

A young boy was wandering around his local church, looking at the various epitaphs and memorials and brasses when he stopped and examined a large bronze plaque hanging on the wall.

"What are all those names up there?" he asked one of the stewards

"Those" came the dignified reply, "are the names of people who have died in the service."

Intrigued, the boy asked "and which service was that, the 8.00 or The 9.30?"

Well, despite that rather flippant attempt at a joke, I am delighted to report that today we are not mourning a death but celebrating a birth, the birth of the church, a day which the people had long awaited when the first believers came alive in their faith.

Coming fifty days after the death and resurrection of Jesus - hence the name Pentecost, the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Easter Day - it shows and tells us what God has done and, just as importantly, is still doing.

At Pentecost Jesus' followers were first given the ability to speak the languages of all assembled and God granted that they might understand one another too. **To coin a phrase, people began singing from the same hymn-sheet.**

There was unity and a powerful dynamism. The church was born

Imagine what it was like for those 1<sup>st</sup> recipients of the Holy Spirit - we are told it felt like a force passing through them. The excitement must have been electric as they began to experience its power and realise the significance of what was happening.

We all have special places where we feel the presence of God and the spirit of God more powerfully than anywhere else. I want to share with you something of one of my special places

We have just returned from a holiday with the Broads on the island of Herm in the Channel. Each Sunday morning there is a service in the small chapel of St Tugual's. This is an ecumenical, non denominational, hymn sandwich ; a service in which we gather - islanders, seasonal workers, holidaymakers, Anglican, Methodist, catholic, agnostic, young and old, different nationalities, whatever our background and wherever we are from, about 80 of us in total - to sing and worship and to experience something of God's love together.

The Location of St Tugual's is vital - it is on a hill top offering a great vantage point from which you can see across to Guernsey and with a short walk on a clear day Jersey, Sark, Alderney and the French coast. Its impossible not to feel a very close presence to God, helped of course by the beauty around, but it is also where a gentle breeze seems to blow, occasionally a strong wind,

which to me seems like something of the spirit of God blowing through that special place leaving me always with a sense of wonder. For me it is a sort of Pentecostal moment.

The Holy Spirit speaks and inspires in many ways both individually and collectively. Suddenly by the Spirit's power we view things as never before, we see in a different light, realise anew what God is doing in us and through us. We gain an understanding and in doing so we may also gain strength and fresh impetus in our lives and in our discipleship.

We can experience something of the spirit when we meet for worship, in sharing the sacrament, in Scripture, in the words we hear in sermons, in the words of the prayers that are offered, through music and hymn singing. Perhaps we ought to ponder more fully over what we hear in those instances and what the Spirit may be saying to us.

In the Bible there are well over 20 different names or qualities associated with the Spirit - the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter, the Guide, the Intercessor, the Counsellor, the Protector; the Helper, the Truth Revealer to name but a few. Which of these words best meets your needs, your desires and your understanding of the Spirit today?

The strangeness of that first Pentecost emphasises that whatever was going on, it was the work of God pouring his spirit on his church. And other extraordinary things happened that day -

- a new community was formed with 3,000 people baptised as Christians. In one day, Jesus' followers went from 12 to 3,012.
- And with the words "Fellow Jews, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say" Peter preached the first-ever gospel sermon - a message about the death, burial & resurrection of Jesus as foretold by the prophets

As a group, the disciples weren't very impressive - just Galilean fishermen, a zealot, a tax collector. They faced insurmountable odds. And yet they turned the world upside down. How? By responding to Jesus' teaching; through fellowship together; by sharing Holy Communion; and in prayer. These four things underpinned everything they did.

2,000 years on The Holy Spirit helps us to know and to glorify Christ and gives us power to live the abundant life which Jesus promised to all who trust in Him. And inspired by the Spirit the Bible becomes a living book where the Word of God is more relevant and meaningful.

In the upper room on the eve of His crucifixion Jesus said to the disciples, "The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." **Today we have heard once again how that promise was fulfilled**

At Easter we often refer to ourselves as an Easter people. Well gathered here today are a Pentecost People, for the Spirit has been and is still being poured out upon us

**Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the gift and the power of that holy spirit. Amen**