

Silent Reflections

Tuesday 26th May

Pentecost – some thoughts



Pentecost

A reading from Scripture

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Acts 2: 2 - 3

Pentecost is often celebrated as the birthday of the church. Yet, at its core it marks a radical shift in how God relates to humanity. It is the moment God stopped dwelling only among his people and started dwelling within them. As Christians today how might we reflect on this ancient event which affected the first Christian disciples?

Jesus had promised his followers that they would receive a power from God which would enable them to do His work. The period of waiting must have been agonising. Before the Holy Spirit arrives the disciples were paralysed by fear and grief. The rushing wind and tongues of fire changed everything. We cannot really comprehend what that experience must have felt like but the Bible tells us about its transformative effect. Gone was the fear and in its place was an empowerment and an overwhelming desire to spread the Gospel. Pentecost reminds us that the same Spirit that transformed the disciples is alive in us.

Pentecost also had an impact on those present around the disciples. Another part of the miracle of Pentecost was that people from many nations heard about the wonders of God in their own native languages. The Holy Spirit binds believers together as one body all who come in faith and so Pentecost calls us to break down walls of division and instead focus on inclusive belonging in Christ.

Pentecost also represented a shift in thinking about the presence of God. In ancient times God's Spirit and presence had been seen as dwelling in a physical temple made of stone. At Pentecost that spirit entered into human hearts so that disciples became the living temples of God. Pentecost is not just an historical event but presents us today with an invitation to deepen our relationship with God and be transformed.

Pentecost

A sound came
rushing, whistling,
Sonic booming
Then sudden stillness
Like a hurricane's eye
They were in it!
And fire came alive
Overhead and brightening
Shining fearful
Consoling
They looked
They saw
Tongues of fire
Over one another
Is there one over me?

Sister Zoe Ellen McClure OSF

You may wish to reflect on what this might mean for you.

Some further questions for reflection

- In what area of your life might you need the Holy Spirit's boldness or comfort ?
- What might "being a living temple" look like in your daily life?
- Is the fire of Pentecost still burning today ?
In the lives of individuals ? In church ? In our communities ?

Building up the Common Life

At Pentecost when the disciples received the Holy Spirit they also received spiritual gifts. These gifts of the spirit-whether they are teaching, encouraging, hospitality, leadership, healing or prophecy are seen as the tools for building up the body of Christ and enabling them to do God's work. The same is true today.

How might Christian disciples today discern and use their gifts ?

- * What spiritual activities or acts of service leave you feeling energised and close to God?
- * Where do others see fruit?

eg Speaking gifts, serving gifts, meeting practical needs, making people feel valued,-

Practical help in prayer

Pentecost teaches us that the power of Holy Spirit can touch all aspects of our lives - including prayer.

As Christians we are taught that all things are possible through the power of God. As Jesus told his disciples before He left them they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians often open prayers by saying "in the power of the Spirit we pray" and so it is His Spirit who provides the power to persist in prayer and face difficulties in life even when we feel discouraged.

Perhaps with this focus of Spirit-empowered prayers we will not lose heart but rather have the endurance to persevere in praying to the God who is:-

"Able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think " Ephesians 3:20

A concluding Prayer

Heavenly father,

Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit,

We confess that we often try to live in our own strength, forgetting the power you have placed within us - just as you transformed the disciples at Pentecost, we pray that you transform us today.

Blow through our lives like a mighty wind clearing away fear, doubt and complacency. Ignite our hearts with the fire of your love, so that we may speak words of life bring healing to our communities and stand as united witnesses of your grace. May your spirit guide our steps and empower us in your service.

In Jesus name Amen

A final thought.....

Without Pentecost The Christ event-life, death and resurrection of Jesus-remains an item of history, the past. With Pentecost, the Christ event becomes an ongoing reality.

- Henri Nouwen