

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 28 MAY 2023 - PENTECOST

COLLECT

God, who as at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 104. 26-37

- 26 O Lord, how manifold are your works! ♦
In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
- 27 There is the sea, spread far and wide, ♦
and there move creatures beyond number, both small and great.
- 28 There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan ♦
which you have made to play in the deep.
- 29 All of these look to you ♦
to give them their food in due season.
- 30 When you give it them, they gather it; ♦
you open your hand and they are filled with good.
- 31 When you hide your face they are troubled; ♦
when you take away their breath, they die and return again to the dust.
- 32 When you send forth your spirit, they are created, ♦
and you renew the face of the earth.
- 33 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; ♦
may the Lord rejoice in his works;
- 34 He looks on the earth and it trembles; ♦
he touches the mountains and they smoke.
- 35 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; ♦
I will make music to my God while I have my being.
- 36 So shall my song please him ♦
while I rejoice in the Lord.
- 37 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth and the wicked be no more. ♦
Bless the Lord, O my soul. Alleluia.

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 1-21

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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people
and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Alleluia!

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 20,
verses 19 to 23**

Glory to you, O Lord

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from ...

A good many years ago now I found myself preaching on Pentecost Sunday in a parish church in Tennessee. As I arrived I was told there would be a lot of children. Probably foolishly I thought I had better have some kind of visual aid – so I asked for an empty jug. (That caused a bit of confusion until people realised that I meant what they call a pitcher!!) When it came to the sermon I asked for a volunteer. Several keen children immediately put up their hand and I picked one who looked sensible. “Now,” I said, “I’m going to pour the contents of this pitcher on to you. Is that OK?” The child looked a bit anxious, but said “Yes.” I then showed the child the inside of the jug. “Can you see anything?” “No!” So I upended the jug. Now, this is where you should never do anything without rehearsal. The person who had found the jug for me thought it looked a bit dirty, so they had rinsed it out. Of course, when I upended it instead of the flow of invisible air that I was hoping for, a sprinkling of water came out! All the point of my illustration was almost totally lost!

Today marks a dramatic change of gear in our understanding of God. Eastertide comes to an end; the Paschal Candle, the great visible symbol of the risen Christ, is taken away; and the time of the Spirit begins. Too easily we find ourselves wishing Jesus was still there, appearing unexpectedly and bringing life and hope. But that is exactly to miss the point. From the moment of Pentecost, God calls us into another dimension. True, we have lost the focal point of God fully present in another human life, but God has invited us to share in a larger, more wonderful truth: everything that we knew in Jesus, everything that Jesus told us of God is now poured out in the gift of the Spirit. God is so close to us that there is not even a millimetre of distance between us and God, between us and all the love and companionship and forgiveness that we found in Jesus.