

## Homily for Pentecost 2020

Most of us take breathing for granted until something happens and we need help or as in extreme cases we are put on a ventilator as so many have been and still are during this pandemic. Many people are wearing masks making sure they don't breathe on others. So in the present circumstances it might seem a little odd to hear, in today's gospel, that Jesus breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit." Another word for breath is wind, and in the first reading wind and fire are signs of the presence of God's Spirit. Two ways of describing the same experience, but the same result, the utter transformation of those who received this gift!

Since the Ascension we have been preparing by prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit this Pentecost asking for the grace "to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel." A major global sign of the times is the pandemic which has swept through the world causing destruction and death, recrimination and blame on the one hand, and heroic service and generosity of spirit on the other. We know where the Spirit has been at work. The quote above about reading the signs of the times comes from Vatican II and continues with a desire "to speak in a language intelligible to every generation." Perhaps the language we need to use is less that of obligation, and more that of invitation, the language of the Gospel, the language of acceptance and belonging, the language of forgiveness, reconciliation, peace the language of encouragement, laughter and joy, the language of love, breathed into our lives by the Holy Spirit as Jesus breathed into the disciples themselves.

We live in very different times to the first century and it is good to remember the words of Pope Francis – 'the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an event that continues. The Holy Spirit transforms us and wants to transform the world.' And that transformation of the world takes place when we cooperate with God by using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to reach beyond ourselves and even our Church to remind ourselves, and those with enormous influence that we are stewards not owners of God's creation, using the finite precious resources responsibly so that future generations can benefit from them, rather than for huge personal profit. When we uphold the dignity of life from conception to natural death, recognising that we have duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families but also to wider society. When we recognise that as a society we are only as strong as the weakest and that others will judge us according to how the most vulnerable in our societies are treated. This crosses all aspects of life, including health care, employment practices, legal and judicial systems, freedom of speech, legitimate opposition, housing, human rights, immigration practices and so much more. None of these are unaffected by the Spirit.

The current pandemic is global and this feast of Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit cannot be contained within one group or Church or nation, but is with us and within us to work for the transformation of the whole of creation and that we stand together in the pursuit of justice and peace for all and that we will settle for nothing less.

## Bidding Prayers for Pentecost:

Celebrant:

We gather together this Pentecost trusting that the Father sends the Spirit to renew the face of the earth, and we pray.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always be guided by the Holy Spirit proclaiming the truth of God's compassion and love.

Lord in your mercy

For those places in our world that are torn apart by division and war – that those with influence will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, work for reconciliation and peace.

Lord in your mercy

For governments and leaders of nations – that they will be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit guiding them to uphold the rights of all and working for a fairer distribution of the world's resources.

Lord in your mercy

For those locked into a world of addiction or enslaved by the power of others – that they will be released from their misery by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the coronavirus pandemic and Margaret O'Driscoll, Pat Collins and Paddy Cahill whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, pour out your Spirit upon your people, and grant us: a new vision of your glory, a new experience of your power, a new faithfulness to your Word and a new consecration to your service, that your love may grow among us and your kingdom come. Through Christ our Lord. Amen