

Bride Valley Service for 23rd May 2021
Pentecost Sunday

The Greeting

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Introduction

Jesus Christ, whom we worship, is our crucified, risen and ascended Lord
and we have walked with him through his journey of love.
We have faced the agony of his suffering and death on a cross.
We have rejoiced at his bursting free from the bonds of death.
We have enjoyed his risen presence with us
and his revelation of himself through the breaking of bread.
We have seen his return to the throne before which every knee shall bow
and every tongue confess that this Jesus is Lord.
And now, with the followers of his own time,
we await the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, his gift to his people,
through whom we make Christ known to the world.

Responsory

As we wait in silence,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we listen to your word,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we worship you in majesty,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your refreshing,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your renewing,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your equipping,

fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your empowering,

fill us with your Spirit.

Silence is kept.

The Pentecost Reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2.1-13)

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.'

The reader says: The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us.**

Gloria in Excelsis

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect

Let us pray that the Spirit will work through our lives
to bring Christ to the world.

Silence is kept.

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.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Reading: Romans 8:22-27

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Holy Spirit, living breath of God

sung by St Martin's Voices

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God,
breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord
to renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause your word to come alive in me;
give me faith for what I cannot see;
give me passion for your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
may your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin
in each thought and deed and attitude:
kindness to the greatest and the least,
gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
giving life to all that God has made,
show your power once again on earth,
cause your church to hunger for your ways.
May the fragrance of our prayers arise;
lead us on the road of sacrifice,
that in unity the face of Christ
may be clear for all the world to see.

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Gospel Reading

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. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

‘I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. ‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

I wonder how the disciples were feeling that first Pentecost morning? They were all gathered together in one place. What a few weeks they had experienced! Entering Jerusalem with Jesus to a hero’s welcome, turning the tables over in the temple, seeing Jesus arrested and falsely tried, the people of Jerusalem turning against him, baying for his blood, Jesus tortured and crucified, dying an agonising death, running away, only to hear about the resurrection - then coming face to face with Jesus in the flesh again. Then spending another month with him doing what, no-one really knows. Then the Ascension into heaven. The disciples must have been so confused, so emotionally exhausted, not knowing what on earth was coming next.

So here we find them, gathered together: and it is Pentecost. Pentecost was a Jewish festival: a major festival first recorded in Deuteronomy 16, a celebration of the harvest. And the disciples were back together again to celebrate Pentecost, perhaps looking forward to the stability of a religious festival that they all knew so well; ready to meet with God as they always had done.

But things are different now - and God uses this moment to fulfil his promise and send the Holy Spirit upon them. The disciples were together, probably praying, and a wind like a tornado fills the house, tongues of fire rest on each believer, and they begin speaking uncontrollably in tongues. The scene was so bizarre that there could only be one, rational conclusion: the crowds of people around them thought that they were drunk.

But no... Peter assures them all that what they are experiencing is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: the gift of God to the early church – and to us, of course.

Now, I'm sure we have all received some strange gifts in our time - at Christmas or on birthdays - and we have to smile graciously and pretend we are happy with them...But here was one gift from God that no-one knew what to do with. What on earth was the Holy Spirit given to them for? And, crucially, why does God give us the Holy Spirit in our church community here in the Bride Valley?

Well, let's think through the options that some people give us.

The gift of Energy and Excitement

Some Christians and Churches treat the Holy Spirit as if this is the gift to make the church an exciting, energised place to be.

Now, of course, there is some truth in this: it is indeed the Holy Spirit who energises us, it is indeed the Holy Spirit who inspires us and stirs us up for mission. But the Holy Spirit is not a gift from God to make church a place of excitement in the sense that we should come here for entertainment. Instead, the energy and excitement that the Holy Spirit brings is for a different purpose altogether. And to see that, we have the story of how the early church conducted itself in terms of community living, developing communal ideas, joining together in worship and prayer daily. And, given the fact that this comes immediately after Pentecost, we are confident that the Holy Spirit was in this new way of forming godly community. It seems to me that the gift of the Holy Spirit to energise and excite is directly related to how we organise church and how we organise our structures and corporate life together.

We must always be mindful of allowing the Holy Spirit to breathe through the institution and structures of our Church. When we do that, our structuring will be energised, our worship will be lively, our mission activity will be meaningful and will transform our community.

The Holy Spirit excites and energises: not so that we can be entertained but so that we can be a mission-shaped church both structurally and in terms of the activities we undertake.

The gift of Power

For others, the Holy Spirit is a gift of power. Jesus had promised that: we read his words in the Gospels: "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you shall receive power." But there is appropriate and inappropriate power with regard to the church.

Christ did promise that the Holy Spirit would confer power on the church: but not in a dictatorial sense to mainstream society. The power the church has is power that is born out of brokenness, not strength. The early history of church power was radically changed after the Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century and then even more so after the Reformation in the 16th-century. The type of power we are talking about points to the way of the cross as the way to life.

The Holy Spirit is the gift of energy and excitement. The Holy Spirit is the gift of power. But crucially, and I think this is the most important of all...

The gift of the Word

Those who were there that first Pentecost heard the Gospel message being proclaimed in their own tongue. It was the Holy Spirit who gave the Church something to say ...

As Peter explained the Pentecost phenomenon to people, he drew their attention to the prophecy of Joel in the Old Testament: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy ..."

The church has a message ... and that command to go and tell others the Good News of Jesus Christ is not something that we do in our own strength but in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit, who gives us the words to say.

That is the Spirit of Pentecost we celebrate today - and that is the Spirit we are called to embrace in all our activities: the Spirit of energy, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of prophecy. The Holy Spirit of God.

If we want to know the power of the Holy Spirit among us then we need to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit and ask God's blessing here in our churches so that we can be a blessing to the whole community and beyond. **Amen.**

The Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken
through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for God to fill us with his Spirit.
Generous God,
we thank you for the *power* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask that we may be strengthened to serve you better.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *wisdom* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to make us wise to understand your will.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *peace* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to keep us confident of your love wherever you call us.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *healing* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to bring reconciliation and wholeness
where there is division, sickness and sorrow.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *gifts* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to equip us for the work which you have given us.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *fruit* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to reveal in our lives the love of Jesus.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *breath* of your Holy Spirit,
given us by the risen Lord.
We ask you to keep the whole Church, living and departed,
in the joy of eternal life.
Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

Generous God, you sent your Holy Spirit upon your Messiah at the river Jordan,
and upon the disciples in the upper room:
in your mercy fill us with your Spirit,
hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

The Peace

God has made us one in Christ.
He has set his seal upon us and, as a pledge of what is to come,
has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts. Alleluia.

cf 2 Corinthians 1.22

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.