

Pentecost / Holy Spirit

We are impressed when we see on the telly a long since deceased person making a speech while they were still alive – speaking from beyond the grave as it were. The person may be dead but their words are alive. (Martin Luther King is a good example)

Well, it's the Holy Spirit who brings alive the words of Jesus in the Bible and makes them applicable to the present. The Spirit brings the past into the full light of the present and prepares us for the future. In imparting the Spirit to the apostles, Jesus breathed on them. We often use the same language when things begin to stagnate. Your marriage might, for instance, be showing signs of stagnation or my Priesthood becoming stale. In situation like this you often hear the expression, 'what is needed here is for someone to breathe new life into the situation'. In this sense we associate the Holy Spirit with renewal.

The Pope said last year, "I need the constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit if my spiritual life is not to stagnate". Inertia and sin are two sides of the one coin. The Spirit calls us to a deeper repentance. When we talk about growing in the life of the Spirit it presumes that we have put paid to deep-seated patterns of selfishness in our lives. As St Paul says in his letter to the Galatians: "If you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit"

Some people associate the Holy Spirit with over-the-top goings-on. It's not about us swinging in the aisles or working ourselves up into a kind of spiritual frenzy. This can, more often than not, masquerade the presence of the Holy Spirit. A true sign of the Spirit's anointing is when we love and feel close to Our Lord in everyday life. Being guided by the Spirit doesn't mean we take short cuts to the God's Kingdom. The love of God may be poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit but that love has to be lived out in the nitty-gritty of everyday life.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to the nascent Church as Jesus promised before His Resurrection. The late Cardinal Suenens - quite a charismatic figure in his day - described what the Church might be like if the Holy Spirit is kept at bay or restricted in His influence. He says:

Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away. Christ stays in the past. The Gospel is a dead letter. The Church is an institution just furthering its

own ends. The Mass is boring. Morality is a slavish adherence to rules. No wonder people leave a Church like that.

But with the Holy spirit God is near, Christ is in the present, the gospel is the living Word of God which I have made my own. With the Holy Spirit the church is a faith-filled community and when I follow the Church's teaching on difficult subjects I'm not slavishly adhering to rules but inwardly freed to live as Jesus taught. With the Holy Spirit my life is characterised by joy even in the midst of turmoil.

With this in mind we pray all the more earnestly: 'Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your divine love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the Earth'.

Questions

- 1. In what areas of the church today do we need the breath of the Holy Spirit? Discuss*
- 2. Let the group discuss ways in which people can become spiritually stagnant in their personal lives. Discuss*
- 3. Why do 'happy flappy' churches attract more people than the more traditional churches? Are they playing more on people's emotions? Discuss*
- 4. When being moral is like slave labour, are we overdue for new outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that our moral decisions become part of who we are and not rules imposed on people from the outside? Discuss*