

PENTECOST©

It was 50 days after the Resurrection that the promised Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles - hence the name Pentecost.

The Spirit can only come on people who have repented of serious sin in their lives. We know this from the sermon which Peter gave on the first Pentecost Day. The people asked him: 'What must we do? Peter replied: 'You must repent for the forgiveness of your sins and then you will receive the Holy Spirit'. And again St Paul tells the Galatians that 'self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit'.

You often hear the question asked: 'What is the Church's greatest need today? Well, to put it succinctly our greatest need is that we be more and more filled with the Holy Spirit. Because it is only those guided by the Holy Spirit whose faith is alive and active. They are also best placed to help reawaken faith in those who have fallen away or lost touch with the Catholic Church.

What is the role of the Spirit vis-à-vis the Church. Well the first thing he does is open our eyes and hearts to the gifts he has already given us. On our confirmation Day we all received the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some people allow these gifts to lie fallow but others use them to bring God's love to the world they live in. Remember what St Paul says: 'The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit'. But as spirit-filled people, we must allow ourselves to be used as a kind of conduit for that love to reach those who need it the most.

Now, our freedom to love can be curtailed at times because of inordinate self-love. But we see from the Gospel today that one of the first appearances of Jesus after the resurrection was to give the apostles authority to free us from sins of self-love through the action of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to the

apostles, 'those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven'. Through the Spirit's power, sins big and small, are forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance, removing obstacles which hinder the free flow of God's love into our hearts.

Maybe you think you are not worthy to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Don't forget the Spirit can use your weaknesses as well as your strengths. St Paul, in his letter to the Romans says, 'the Spirit comes to help us in our weaknesses'. So, please don't shy away or be a shrinking violet or focus too much on your inadequacies. The Spirit of the world with its emphasis on competition, power and money tends to make people feel small and inadequate if they don't measure up. As Justin Welby said recently, 'the world can be a very unforgiving and cruel place'. The Spirit, more often than not, works with ordinary unassuming people to spread His message of love and peace to a world which cries out for it. Most of us are in that category.

So, today, Pentecost Sunday we ask the Holy Spirit to take away our fears, to melt our resistance, to open our eyes and hearts to the His gifts and enable us to use them despite our human frailty.

<p><i>Light immortal, light divine</i> <i>Visit thou these hearts of thine</i> <u><i>And our inmost being fill.</i></u></p>
