

## **Pentecost (ABC)**

*We are impressed when we see on the telly a long since deceased person making a speech while they were still alive. 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 relevant in the here and now. In the Mass, for instance, we ask the Holy Spirit to sanctify the bread and wine so that they become Christ's body and blood for us here today. The Holy Spirit will keep us from stagnating spiritually and living in the past. In today's gospel, Jesus breathed on the apostles. We often use the same language when things begin to fester – 'we breathe new life into a situation'. In the Pentecost hymn we sing: "breathe on me breath of God and fill me with live anew".

The Holy Father said last year, "I need the constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit if my spiritual life is not to stagnate". Stagnation and sin go together. When we talk about growing in the life of the Spirit it presumes that we're not 'stuck in the rut of sin, big or small. This can be a big ask for someone who is not open to change. For instance we can be so used to gossiping that it becomes part of who we are, part of our personality. It doesn't trouble us anymore. But the Holy Spirit keeps prompting us to change.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was accompanied by extraordinary phenomena. His influence, however, is not limited to these things. A true sign of the Spirit's anointing is when we come to a new awareness of God's love for us. St Paul in his letter to the Romans says: "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit". But it doesn't end there. That same love has to then flow out of our hearts into our hands and feet and be lived out in the nitty-gritty of everyday life. This applies to everyone in the Church.

The late Cardinal Suenens - quite a charismatic figure in his day - described what the Church might be like if the Holy Spirit is not given free reign. He says:

*Without the Holy Spirit, God tends to be distant. Christ stays in the past. The Gospel is a dead letter. The Church is just another institution furthering its own ends. The Mass becomes boring. Morality is a slavish adherence to rules and regulations.*

*But with the Holy spirit God is near, Christ is in the present, the gospel comes alive in ways I hadn't experienced before. The church is a faith-filled community not just another association. With the Holy Spirit living a moral life is about being inwardly transformed not slavishly keeping rules. With the Holy Spirit my life is characterised by inner peace 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'.*