



This week began with a special Sunday in the Church calendar called 'Pentecost'. For Christians it is known as the day the Holy Spirit first came upon the waiting disciples in tongues of fire which did not burn and which enabled them to all to speak in many different languages. The significance of Pentecost is understood better if we dig back into the bible and discover the roots of this Jewish feast. **Read Acts 2: 1 – 12.**

1. The origin of the Day of Pentecost.

- Pentecost was the Greek name for the Old Testament 'Feast of Harvest' which was one of the three major festivals in which all the Israelites took part. (**Exodus 23: 14-16**) It happened 50 days after Passover, which was when they remembered the flight from Egypt. The people were to bring the first-fruits of their crops to the temple, thanking God for His provision and giving Him 10% of their bounty as an act of worship.
- Since AD 70, when the Romans destroyed the temple, it has become the day for celebrating and remembering the giving of the covenant on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6) and then the giving of the Ten Commandments.

2. The Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.

- This particular Pentecost was 50 days after the crucifixion (which happened at Passover). The Apostles were joined with about 120 disciples, including women, and were waiting in Jerusalem and praying for the Holy Spirit which Jesus had promised them at the Ascension (Acts 1: 8, 13-15). Also, Jerusalem was crowded with God fearing Jews from 'all over the known world' coming to celebrate Pentecost.
- Suddenly, the Holy Spirit came in **power** to the disciples – like a mighty wind and like flames which settled on their heads. What's more, the international, multi-lingual crowd which gathered round the disciples could all understand what they were saying, in their own languages: they were **empowered** to speak in strange tongues
- Peter stood up and was **empowered** to declare the Good News. In a first sermon, unscripted and without notice, he preached the meaning of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension and proclaimed Him Lord and Christ.
- The result? 3,000 people came to the Lord: there was a **harvest** of souls. Every human soul is valuable to God and every 'conversion' is actually a giving back to God that which belongs to Him cf. **Luke 20: 20-25**. Jews knew themselves as the people of God, we call ourselves Christians: we are never to use His Name meaninglessly. Being a Christian is not just part of our culture or our calendar, the Holy Spirit demands activity

3. When and why do we pray 'Come Holy Spirit'?

- 'Come Holy Spirit' must never be an automatic response to observing the state of our broken world and wishing a seemingly absent Spirit would 'show up and do something'.
- It is a prayer prayed by someone who knows firstly that the world is not right because 'I am not right'. Who recognises their own anger, greed selfishness and yearning for control, and hears the Gospel and realises it's time to say or re-say the beautiful baptismal vows: 'I turn to Christ, I repent of my sins, I renounce evil'.
- When we believe that our salvation comes through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we receive the Holy Spirit, so we can say, 'The Lord is here, His Spirit is with us'. His Spirit is with me!
- Then 'Come Holy Spirit' becomes a request for His direct activity in our hearts, which is needed to bring in the harvest of souls. That might be an awareness of His nearness or an urging to speak with authority.
- Only the Church has the Gospel message. We all must do our part in praying 'Come Holy Spirit' for our broken world; then the Holy Spirit will bring people to faith in Christ: they become a new creation, healed and whole.

Some thoughts to ponder:

1. ***Jews are very good at remembering their history. Do we Christians take as much time teaching our children about their Christian heritage? How do we combat the commercialisation of our Festivals?***
2. ***Take time to imagine you were all there on that Day when the Spirit empowered the disciples. How would you have felt or reacted? Would you have been a scoffer, or a sceptic, or one of the 3,000?***
3. ***'Every human soul is valuable to God'. Discuss!***
4. ***'The Holy Spirit demands activity'. Do we take the Holy Spirit for granted?***
5. ***Do we need to take our responsibilities to pray 'Come Holy Spirit' for the world more seriously?***