



St James' Church, Weybridge

Pentecost – 19th May 2024

Introduction and Call to Worship

Today we celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church! We rejoice in the gift of God's Spirit, breath of life and power of love. So, we open hearts, ready to receive from him the promised Spirit, that we may be led into all truth.

Today's Readings

First Reading Acts 2:1-21

The coming of the Spirit gives the first Christian leaders the energy and courage to proclaim the Gospel.

Gospel John 15:26-27. 16:4b-15

Jesus speaks of the Spirit who will guide and enable the disciples when Jesus himself has gone.

HOMILY

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13)

Today on the feast of Pentecost, (Whit-Sunday) we celebrate the gift of God revealed in the third person of the Blessed Trinity – the Holy Spirit known as the comforter or Advocate which guides the Church and Christians in all truth. Jesus taught the disciples that the truth will set them free. The truth is important, but on our televisions we often hear about the opposite, the truth being obscured or perverted or hidden. For Christians, truth is the gift of God who is the possessor and the giver of all truth, for God knows everything, yes even the truth in our own hearts.

Truth is a complicated matter for sometimes we fear the truth; we think it will inhibit our freedom or hurt someone else. There is nothing worse than the feeling of waiting in the Doctors Surgery in anticipation of, 'The Truth.' Likewise, we often see the truth but choose not to recognise it for what it is. Of course, it is better to know the truth than be misled by a lie.

Jesus told his disciples that the truth will set them free (John 8:32), for truth liberates us from doubts, illusions, and fears. Since God is the source of all truth, then the closer we draw to him and listen to his Word, the scriptures, the more we will grow in the knowledge of him and of his great love and wisdom for us. The Sacraments, such as the Eucharist allow us to meet God and for Jesus himself, the ultimate truth to be present amidst the business of our lives.

Jesus promised his disciples the Spirit of truth who would lead them, for the Holy Spirit, "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), he himself being "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), the Word made flesh and the one who dwelt among us.

Friends, my fear is that we live in an age rather sceptical of the truth, hence the emphasis by some upon 'fake news' which I would suspect is often a cover for the truth itself. Sometimes today it is hard to know what to trust – or even whom. Jesus speaks of the Spirit as an advocate, someone who understands the issues and argues for the truth, someone who helps with communication. There will come a time, Jesus tells his disciples, when he will no longer be there to speak to people

about himself and about God.

That task will then belong to his followers (and therefore to you and I today). But they, as we today, will not be on their own for Christians need the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

The story of the day of Pentecost as read a moment ago from Luke's Acts of the Apostles, shows this working in practice. The disciples have lived through momentous events, and experienced strong emotions. They are exhausted, confused, and a little afraid. But then something miraculous happens as they wait in the upper room. Pentecost turns their world upside down and equips them with the gift of communication. Suddenly they have words.

They can go out into the street with confidence and tell the crowds what has happened, and the crowds can hear them. The Church has found its voice; words that continue today to speak of truth for a new generation as the same Spirit of God continues to reveal the purposes of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit speaks through the scriptures and reveals the truth. St. Paul teaches that "no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Risen Christ that helps us recognize the Truth as well as comforting, challenging, and changing our lives today, transforming us from glory to glory and transforming the lives of those around us also.

As Christians who are committed to regularly gathering in this place for worship, to be renewed, taught and built up for service, we receive the gifts of God, the spiritual resources needed to communicate the Gospel, as God calls us to share his Word with others and experience his presence here at St James' and out in the world, in Weybridge and well beyond this parish!

But it is still easy for Christians to fail to listen, to communicate badly, and to end up not speaking the same language. We need to learn to be in the world without being of the world, because our message is extraordinary, but our language needs to be understood.

Good communication is essential in the proclamation of the Gospel – not least here at the heart of Weybridge Town Centre where we have so much work to do for the Gospel.

So, we do rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, our advocate, who helps us to perceive the truth and to proclaim it beyond the walls of this Church? This message of transformation stands in stark contrast with purported fake news of some, for we share God's love which is for everyone! Amen.

Father Damian Harrison-Miles, May 2024.