

2025 Pentecost Sermon – Ken Rampling

This Sunday is the feast of Pentecost, fifty days from Passover (hence the name),..

In the Jewish calendar the festival of Shavuot ('weeks'), one of the three great pilgrim festivals.

- It was the beginning of the wheat harvest
- Also celebrated the giving of the Torah on Sinai.

It is no wonder there were so many people from so many different nations in Jerusalem.

Pentecost is often called 'the birthday of the church' and I am struck by the extraordinary openness and obedience in the Early Church to supernatural direction.

This prayer-saturated, Spirit-led model of mission seems to me to be very different from the sensible strategies and systems, the committees and considerations of today's Church.

It was even a significant departure for the disciples themselves.

Where once they have hidden in a locked room 'for fear of the Jewish leaders', (John 20:19) now somewhere between verse 2 and verse 14 in today's gospel the believers have moved from their private space out into the public square.

The coming of the Spirit has dispelled their fear and leads God's people out into proclamation!

You see the gift that is the coming of the Holy Spirit is not a gift for the church it is for individual believers like you and me. And it isn't always something that happens in group situations.

Consider the words of Gabriel to Mary...

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1.35).

The move of the Spirit as Mary greeted her cousin Elizabeth...

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:41)

The words of Jesus to the disciples...

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever (John 14:16)

In all these examples, when the Spirit comes upon a person (or people) this 'receiving power',

AND is accompanied by a new or renewed purpose.

Just as an aside, had you considered that Mary, Jesus mother, was almost certainly still in that upper room amongst the 120 or so people referred to in ACTS 1:15 and has experienced this before.

Certainly not in the same way, or for the same purpose, but certainly not the first or only time.

Pentecost only makes sense with a Trinitarian understanding of God:

- the Spirit (presence and power) of God
- is sent by Jesus who baptises and fills his followers
- with the Spirit, who comes from the Father.

There are three important things to note about Peter's speech from Acts 2.14 onwards.

Firstly, Peter describes the coming of the Spirit not as a flash in the pan, but the coming of the new age—a first fruits of the new and permanent reality, poured out at the Festival of First Fruits at Pentecost

Secondly, Peters words are directed to people who could not in any way be considered a church. They are here for the festival, but they are from all over.

Thirdly, the profound personal experience that Pentecost is for individuals...

- transforms fear into courage and hope,
- turns the believers from looking in to looking outward, and
- enables them to offer a message of life to all people,
- so that the Spirit can form the people of God into a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and diverse group centred around the proclamation of God as Father, Son and Spirit.

So, why did God deem it necessary for the Holy Spirit to be sent at all?

Pauls tells us clearly that:

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption... (Rom 8:15-16)

And Jesus tells us that

you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1.8)

Do you recall how:

- The Spirit spoke and Philip left a successful ministry in Samaria of all places, (Acts 8:5-8) going into the dessert to meet the Ethiopian eunuch.
- Peter went to the house of Cornelius and the Holy spirit descended on EVERYONE in the house.
- And how the Spirit spoke to Ananias who went to pray for the blind persecutor Saul.
- How the Spirit speaks and the elders in Antioch obey, sending out Barnabus and Saul.
- Barnabas is described as “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith,” (Acts 11:24)

The reality of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church is in fact the filling of the individual believers where we, YOU and I.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:13)

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. (2 Tim 1:6-7)

*This is how we know that we live in him **and** he in us: He has **given** us **of** his **Spirit**. (1john 4:13)*

I want finish by sharing with you a quote from St Augustine that has been a theme during this week's Lectio 365 devotions

**Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may be holy.**

**Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work may be holy.**

**Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
to love what is holy.**