

‘Send forth thy Spirit, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth’

*Prayer to the Holy Spirit*

With the feast of Pentecost, we come to the end of the cycle that began at the start of Advent. We have recalled and celebrated the coming of Christ at Christmas; His manifestation to the world at the Epiphany; His time of fasting and temptation in Lent; His suffering and death on Good Friday; His resurrection on Easter Sunday; and His ascension back into heaven just ten days ago. Our Lord’s mission has come full circle.

And yet, with Pentecost, the liturgical cycle is, in some regards, only just getting under way. Only now do we begin the full cycle of Gospel passages at Sunday Masses which cover the bulk of Our Lord’s teaching and miracles. Between now and the end of the liturgical year a vast swathe of Good News is proclaimed. And in some ways, that’s the whole point of Pentecost.

With the sending forth of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son a new age is begun, and the work of re-creation – in the order of grace – gets underway. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the work is continued down the ages that Our Lord began whilst He was personally present in Palestine.

The power of the Holy Spirit burst upon the face of the earth two thousand years ago, and continues to burst forth every year on the feast of Pentecost as God renews creation each year with another deluge of grace. As has been said before, we do not merely celebrate or remember past events whenever we observe the feast days and seasons of the Church’s year. With each passing feast day we are actually drawn, through our being present at the liturgy on the day, into a deeper participation of the mystery we are celebrating. At Christmas, we do not merely remember the birth of Christ: we are drawn into a deeper participation of the

mystery of the Incarnation as heaven reaches down to earth and God's hand reaches out to a fallen human race. At Easter, we do not merely recall the death and resurrection of the Son of God: rather, we are drawn more deeply into the supernatural reality of our redemption.

Likewise, at Pentecost the Holy Spirit's sending forth into the Church is renewed, and the Church Herself is, each year, revived by a fresh outpouring of grace. So, just as the first Pentecost saw the start of the spread of the Gospel and thousands of conversions in the space of just a few days, and just as the feast of Pentecost in our own time marks the beginning of the second half of the Church's year with its proclamation of Divine Revelation, so we have to take on board what the renewal of the Church – each Pentecost – should mean for us, here and now, in Ipswich.

Teenagers preparing to be Confirmed are always told that the Sacrament of Confirmation is their own personal Pentecost when they will receive the same seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles received in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. And this is absolutely the case! That first Pentecost brought in a huge harvest of souls as Our Lord's disciples set about their mission of going to the farthest reaches of the earth, preaching and baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

So, if we have been Confirmed and received those same seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit – and most adults here this morning have been Confirmed – what are the signs that we, too, have begun to take the Good News into the farthest-flung corners of Ipswich and Suffolk? There is no room for complacency, as the servant in the Parable of the Talents discovered after he failed to make any return on the talent with which he had been entrusted by the Master. Never mind what others have done; what have *you* done to bring others to the Catholic Faith? What will you do in the wake of this year's feast of Pentecost to bring others to the Catholic Faith? Do not kid yourself into thinking that you are too old, or too young; or too busy with your studies, or your career, or your family, to be involved in the Church's

missionary endeavour. Spreading the Catholic Faith is not an optional extra reserved just for those who seem to have a little more energy or time than you have.

What are you doing to build up the life of our parish? What are you doing in your prayer life to commend souls to God's mercy? What are you doing within your household to nurture an environment of faith? What are you doing at school, at college, or in your workplace, to let others know that the Catholic Faith is, for you, a vital and necessary part of your life? What have you done recently to make sure you are better equipped to answer the questions of other people about the Catholic Faith? What are you doing to strengthen your own faith so that you can face being questioned, or criticized, or ridiculed by family members, friends, or colleagues?

You may not be called to preach in the mission lands of developing countries. But you *are* being called by God, as St Peter says elsewhere in the New Testament, to be 'ready always to satisfy everyone that asks you a reason for the hope which is in you' (1 Peter 3:15).

This parish has recently laid at the feet of Our Lady a spiritual bouquet of almost 3,500 rosaries said for the conversion of souls in Ipswich and beyond. But we cannot leave it at that: these prayers – however marvellous – are only the beginning. Over the summer, everyone will have the chance to become part of a new missionary endeavour. So, watch this space, and in the meantime, renew and strengthen your own faith with prayer and learning, and start to share it with the people you meet at home, at the gym, and in the workplace.

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