

Shellrock Benefice Service Sheet for Pentecost, May 31st 2020

Collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith; revive your Church with the breath of love and renew the face of the earth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Readings

Acts 2: 1-21; Psalm 104, 26-36, 37b; 1 Cor 12, 3b-13; John 20, 19-23

A Reflection

This little bit of church history really amused me when I was doing my research for today. Apparently, in mediaeval times some cathedrals were built especially to impress on the people the meaning of Pentecost. In the great domed and richly painted ceilings were a number of small carefully disguised doors. During worship on Pentecost when the whole town was gathered in the cathedral, some parishioners were drafted to climb up on to the roof. At the appropriate moment during the liturgy, they would release a live dove through one of the small doors. This dove would swoop over the congregation as a living symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit. At the same time the choir boys would make whooshing noises and the doors in the ceiling would be opened again and this time buckets of rose petals were showered on the congregation, symbolising tongues of flame falling on the worshippers below. Those medieval Christians may not have been able to read about Pentecost from the Bible but nevertheless this visual demonstration must have left a lasting impression.

Today, many centuries later, I wonder what we understand about the Holy Spirit. We speak about the Holy Spirit in our prayers and liturgies and blessings and we call upon the Holy Spirit at important times of transition, at baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination. All of us will I'm sure have some a sense of what the Holy Spirit means. At this time of "lockdown" which has given us more opportunities for reflection, we perhaps can think a little more about what we as individuals think about the Holy Spirit. Which of the particular images of the Spirit speaks to us, for there are many: fire and flames, breath and wind, doves, sources of energy and creativity. Susanna Gunner asks us: "What difference does God's Spirit make to us? What does it mean for Christians today to live as Pentecost people? How might we let the holy winds of change transform us?" Important questions, I think, especially as we are looking at the church of the future.

Suggestions for prayer:

For all people known to us who are ill at this time

For the bereaved and especially for the family and friends of Doreen Lincoln

For teachers and all those concerned with the life and well-being of children

For thanks that there are those in all our communities who are willing to go the extra mile to help and to care for others

For thanks to all volunteers wherever they are, dedicating time and energy to serve others

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever Amen

Blessing

May the fire of God change us. May the breath of God fill us with new life. May the spirit of God inspire us so that we reach out in love and with care and compassion to those whom we meet each day of our lives. Amen