

Sunday May 23rd, 2021, Pentecost Sunday.

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

And what a glorious morning it is to celebrate the Birthday of the Church, the wonderful Feast of the Coming down of the Holy Spirit on the Fiftieth day after Easter, Pentecost!

It's always worth remembering when we look at statues, or pictures or icons of God the Father, Jesus his Son, or even our Blessed Mother Mary, that there are no descriptions of these figures in the Bible at all, not one, hence the many different variations of them in art throughout the world and throughout history. But while images of the Father, the Son, and the Mother of God may change, images of the Holy Spirit remain globally constant, as the Holy Spirit is vividly described by the signs and symbols by which this third member of the Trinity is made apparent.

Each of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the dove, the breath and wind, and tongues of fire, has a great kind of movement, a sense of energy and dynamism. You think of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove circling, swooping around Christ at his baptism, coming down upon, confirming him in his role as the only begotten Son of God. You think of the air: firstly God's breath, hovering over the waters at the dawn of creation, breathing life into Adam; or here at Pentecost, the noise and rushing of the wind that is the Holy Spirit being enough to shake the foundations of the house. And you think of the tongues of fire; giving light, warmth and encouragement, but also something dangerous, temperamental, a force to be reckoned.

Such energy and dynamism, then, was certainly experienced by the disciples on that first Pentecost day, as recorded in the exciting passage from Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11. The Holy Spirit gives them a new sense of purpose. The Holy Spirit anoints them to share in and continue the ministry of the risen Christ. The Holy Spirit compels them to go out to the whole world and preach the message of God's love and forgiveness. From a group of frightened, confused and lost individuals comes a group of men determined to change the world as they have been changed by the Holy Spirit, ready to proclaim all that Christ has taught them, able to suffer the taunts and jibes of misunderstanding bystanders, bearing the courage to die for what they believe. By the power of the Holy Spirit, from this group of men, comes the Church, the living body of Christ in the world then and now.

Then *and* now. Each of us has experienced our own personal Pentecost, when we received the Holy Spirit at our baptisms, and, in a special way, on our Confirmation day. And though we are maybe not always able to associate ourselves with the symbols of fire or rushing wind, or whatever, we should remember that the Spirit comes to us differently in different ways, acknowledging the uniqueness of every individual, transforming us, supporting us, and moving us – as the Spirit did all those years ago to the Apostles on that very first Pentecost Sunday..

Because when, in the name of Christ, we work for peace and reconciliation, we are moving in the Spirit. When we speak words of love, passing on the message of Christ, we are moving in the Spirit. When our actions proclaim our service to the ministry of Christ, we are moving in the Spirit. And so, too, are we moving in the Spirit, when we recognise Christ in the words and actions of others, when we see Christ in the faces of those around us, when we acknowledge Christ to be in the stranger, the needy, the war torn. And when, whatever our reasons or emotions, we offer up a prayer to the Godhead, we are being moved in the Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit, the unseen, maybe unfelt, Spirit of God, which draws us all together as the Body of Christ, the Church in the world today. On this Pentecost Sunday, sometimes referred to as the birthday of the Church, let us acknowledge our empowerment through this great gift of God, and as the apostles opened the doors of the upper room, open the doors of our hearts, that all may share in the energy and dynamism, and warmth and love, and the amazing Gifts of, and that is, the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus Christ,

before ascending into heaven You promised to send the Holy Spirit

to finish Your work in the souls of Your Apostles and Disciples.

Grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul,

the work of Your grace and Your love.

Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom, that I may despise the perishable things of this world

and only desire the things that are eternal;

the Spirit of Understanding, to enlighten my mind with the light of Your divine truth;

the Spirit of Counsel, that I may always choose the way of pleasing God and gaining heaven;

the Spirit of Fortitude, that I may bear my cross with You and overcome with courage

all the obstacles that oppose my salvation;

the Spirit of Knowledge, that I may know God and myself,

and grow perfect on the path to holiness;

the Spirit of Piety, that I may seek to serve God and His Church;

and the Spirit of Awe and Wonder, that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God

and may seek to act in any way to displease Him.

Mark me, dear Lord, with the sign of Your true disciples

and inspire me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.

What else could we sing today but that *classic* Pentecost hymn, ‘Come Holy Ghost Creator Come.’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIHKqC83s2U>

We were fortunate enough to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation here last year *just* before lockdown with Bishop Paul. Bishop Paul bravely wore the vestment created by the all the confirmandi and ‘prayer and pizza’ group, and it remains here as our Holy Spirit vestment, which I will be wearing this year. Hopefully we can look to another celebration for the Sacrament in the years to come, as the Bishop begins to fill his diary for the next year or so post-Covid.

Holy Spirit of God,

On this Feast of Pentecost

look with love upon your people.

In your mercy, bless Bishop Paul.

Guide this shepherd you have chosen to lead us.

Give him the grace this is You, Holy Spirit

so that he may bring us to you

in the footsteps of Jesus our Lord

to the glory of the God the Father.

So may your this Diocese of Lancaster and this Parish of St. Bernadette,

be built up and in your name glorified.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

When I started on my ‘Dickens’ themed walks last week, I mentioned a reference to the classic first line from ‘Tale of Two Cities.’ Well, as it’s Sunday, and as it was ‘World Book Day’ on Friday, I thought I’d give you a little quiz of other classic ‘First Lines from Classic Novels’. Some are easy, some more difficult, but they are all well-known classic books, many of which (if not all) have also being transformed into films and TV series (and most of them Broadway Shows, now I think about it). So grab a coffee and a cake, and see how you do. Answers at the end of the message!

1. Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again.
2. When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow.
3. Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small, unregarded yellow sun.
4. All children, except one, grow up.
5. ‘We should start back,’ Gared urged as the woods began to grow dark around them. ‘The wildlings are dead.’
6. Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents,’ grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

7. Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.
8. I have just returned from a visit to my landlord, the solitary neighbour I shall be troubled with.
9. You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings.
10. The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.
11. Scarlett O'Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm as the Tarleton twins were. (Kind of a giveaway in that one!)
12. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.
13. It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
14. It was three hundred forty-eight years, six months, and nineteen days ago today that the citizens of Paris were awakened by the pealing of all the bells in the triple precincts of the City, the University, and the Town.
15. The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home.
16. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.
17. Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife.
18. Call me Ishmael.

How did you do you? Whatever you are doing today make it a beautiful day for this beautiful Feast.

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.

1. Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (1938) 2. Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (1960) 3. Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) 4. J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* 5. George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (1996) 6. Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868, 1869) 7. J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1998) 8. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) 9. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818) 10. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953) 11. Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (1936) 12. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) 13. George Orwell, *1984* (1949) 14. Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831) 15. Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) 16. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) (You should have got that!) 17. L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) 18. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851)