

Sunday May 31st, The Feast of Pentecost

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the advice from the government and the medics about what we should be doing in this time of crisis.

And I hope everyone is praying together for our all our intentions in this time of need.

And so it is that we come to the great Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles.

Before he returned to his Father in Heaven, the risen Jesus visited his disciples and promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them. Today's first reading, Acts 2:1-11, tells the story of Pentecost Sunday. There were many people in Jerusalem, as Pentecost was a celebration for the end of the grain harvest. When the disciples were gathered together with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and some other women, they suddenly heard a noise like a strong wind. Then they saw what looked to be flames of fire over each of them, '*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*' The Holy Spirit filled the disciples with courage and faith, empowering them to share the Good News with others. They began to tell others about Jesus, and that he died for us and rose to new life. On this day, the gift of the Spirit allowed the disciples to communicate even with those who spoke different languages – and the reading outlines the many different countries from where people had gathered. Peter asked the people to be baptized and receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Many people, over 3,000, were baptized that day, and the Apostles continued to baptize throughout the city. They laid their hands on them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, giving them strength and courage. The Church was born – hence today often being referred to as 'The Birthday of the Church.' Eileen has once again helpfully provided us with a knitted version of the scene.

The Litany for Pentecost has been especially beautifully rewritten for this time of Pandemic:

*Come, Holy Spirit, come, Spirit of God,
come with your peace, your power, your light.
Come with forgiveness, courage and hope.
Come, Spirit of God, unite us with the risen Jesus,
turn us again to the Father of Jesus.
Together they pour You daily into our hearts.
Come now to our suffering world, sick with a killing virus
and everywhere threatened with silent death,*

*but most cruelly among your poorest children.
Come to our first responders, our doctors and nurses and hospital staff,
the men and women who preserve the civic order
and protect us from fire and bring us our food.
Come now to the hearts and minds of scientists seeking a vaccine for the pandemic,
to all who support their work, bringing to it in equal measure patience and commitment.
With your gift, the community of believers who came to be called church was born.
Strengthen us to be working signs for all humanity to be one, a community of mutual care,
and a sacrament of salvation through your loving power,
united eternally with the Holy Mystery
who gives us Jesus, the Risen One among us,
to bring our suffering yet beautiful world home forever.
Amen.*

And let's sing 'Come Holy Ghost, Creator Come,' in a very 'folksy' version!

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

The second verse of 'Come Holy Ghost' begins 'Thou who art called the Paraclete', and the title is also used the Divine Praises, 'Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.' In John 14:16-17 we read Jesus saying, '*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*' 'Advocate' or 'Counsellor', 'Comforter' or 'Befriender' in different translations comes from the Greek word *parakletos*. This term referred to a person called to help alongside another. It includes the idea of one who comforts and assists, and that's where we get this title for the Holy Spirit, and the word in the hymn. On this Pentecost Sunday, let us pray that we can be 'Paracletes' to the world around us.

*Creator Spirit, come and visit the souls that are Yours:
fill with heavenly grace the hearts that You created.
You are called by the name of Paraclete,
gift of God most high, spring of life, fire, love and the soul's anointing.
Kindle a light in our minds, pour love into our hearts
and uphold with Your unfailing strength the frailty of our human nature.
Grant that through You we may know the Father and the Son,
and may we ever believe You to be the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. Amen.*

Spellchecker has just tried to change 'paracletes' to 'parakeets'. Mind you, the Holy Spirit did appear in the form of a dove, so maybe it's not too far off.

If ever I'm asked *when* the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles, I always say 'about ten to nine on Pentecost Sunday.' This is because, when the Apostles go out into Jerusalem, people who do not understand them think they are drunk, to which Peter replies '*why, these men are not drunk! It is only nine o'clock in the morning!*' (Acts 2:15), so the Holy Spirit must have come down upon them just before this. Incidentally, as I said before, Pentecost marked the end of the grain harvest, and it was tradition that no alcohol was taken before ten o'clock in the morning on this day, hence the time check. And that's a fact.

Don't forget that we have a Pentecost weekend of praying the Rosary, and having prayed with Pope Francis and the world yesterday afternoon, today we are called to pray the Rosary with Bishop Paul and the Diocese, taking our part on the British Rosary Rally, at 5pm. The world needs many rosaries, so let us enjoin ourselves spiritual on these occasions.

Mass for Pentecost is available on the Youtube with the following link:

<https://youtu.be/UGCqvT3DRj8>

We have two hymns, 'Come Down, O Love Divine,' and 'Come Holy Ghost, Creator Come.'

Don't forget, if you are passing the Church, there are still some Miraculous Medals left, and some prayer cards there, which depict the Holy Spirit window in St. Peter's Rome, which you are welcome to take for yourself, and friends and family. I'll see if I have any rosaries I can leave there, too. I have also left some sealed bottles of Holy Water which I have blessed, on the table opposite the R.I.P board.

The children's Cadbury's Cream Eggs are now in the porch, sheltered from the sun opposite the R.I.P. board. Don't forget, to take an egg, you have to place a picture of Tobias on the noticeboard above the basket of eggs. Put your name on it and there will be a prize for the one Tobias thinks is the best. The result will be announced next Sunday!

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost. 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, though the building is; 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.

P.S. Don't forget to sign <https://citizengo.org/en-gb/rf/179408-open-our-churches-and-restore-worship>