

Acts 1.12-14

St Luke sets the stage for the arrival of the Holy Spirit which for him marks the dynamic beginnings of the Church. The disciples are gathered in the Upper Room, waiting in prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles are mentioned by name (except Judas). So is Mary, the mother of Jesus – a model of faith during the earthly life of Jesus.

For nine days between the Ascension and Pentecost the apostles and Mary waited and prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. This meant prayer and mutual support. No doubt there was a cocktail of emotions in that Upper Room as they obeyed the command to wait. Those days of preparation and waiting remind us, the Church, of the priority of patient waiting in prayer for God to act and to empower. Too often we rush into projects and schemes and at best bolt on a prayer for God to bless our endeavours. Rather we are to place ourselves and our ideas before the Cross, focussed on Jesus, waiting on God and listening to the Holy Spirit, so that we might be purged, challenged and empowered.

When the Holy Spirit did come to Mary and the Apostles they were completely open and trusting as to what God would do and be through them. This is our calling too. It is not our success and achievements that matter in the Church, but rather our willingness to wait on God in prayer so that when we do act according to God's will, his love and person are seen and revealed. All for his glory and the manifestation of his saving love in the dark places of our hurting world.

These verses may be few and seemingly insignificant but they contain a vital truth for a Church panicking because of decline and obsessed with management techniques, aping the world. Waiting in prayer before God is about risk and inspiration, being taken in new and exciting directions as happened in that Upper Room when the Holy Spirit came to Mary and the Apostles. *Laus Deo! Praise God! Alleluia!*

Elements of the Mass

The Pentecost Sequence

'Sequences' in the Liturgy, are Latin poems set to plainsong, to be sung by cantors before the gospel. Prior to the liturgical reforms of the 1960s, sequences were used on many different liturgical festivals and many have survived in different forms: the hymn 'Laud, O Sion, thy salvation' sung during the Sunday Blessed Sacrament procession at Walsingham is the sequence for Corpus Christi. The modern Missal only prescribes the use of a sequence on two days: Easter and Pentecost. The beautiful Pentecost Sequence, also known as the 'Golden Sequence' was written by Stephen Langton, Archbishop Canterbury who died in 1228. An English metrical version is sung as the hymn: 'Come thou Holy Spirit come.'



24th May
2020

The Seventh
Sunday of Easter
(Sunday after
Ascension Day)

Father, Glorify your Son

In our first Reading from the Acts of the Apostles today, St Luke describes a tiny community of the faithful gathered in prayer. The Apostles, who have witnessed the Ascension of the Lord, return to the upper room in



Jerusalem, and are joined there by Mary, the Mother of Jesus. She is already Our Lady of Pentecost, having conceived Jesus by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. The prayers of the faithful gathered together will be answered by a fresh outpouring of the same Spirit. 'Father, glorify your Son', prayed Our Lord in his great high priestly prayer, on the night before he was arrested and condemned, of which we read in today's Gospel. Christ prays that we may see his glory. Blessed Mary and the Apostles, together with the Church triumphant, pray constantly to the Lord for us, yet militant here in earth. We may be few, the task may seem beyond us, and we may feel afraid and unsettled in these difficult days, but the risen and ascended Christ is with us. Do not be afraid!

O Sing unto the Lord

Many of our greatest hymns are translations of Latin texts, particularly those of the ancient Office Hymns appointed for Morning and Evening Prayer. Hymns based on Greek texts are less common, but no less beautiful. One that is particularly appropriate as we look towards the feast of Pentecost is 'O King enthroned on high', translated from the 8th century Greek hymn, 'Basileu ouranie, Parakleite' by John Brownlie (1857-1925). Brownlie was born in Glasgow and combined his vocation as a minister in the Scottish Free Church with a particular interest in the hymns of the Eastern church. The hymn is from the Pentecostarion, the office book of the Greek church, where it was used on the eve of Pentecost, and speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. Although set to various tunes, the most common is 'Temple', composed by Sir Henry Walford-Davies for the Temple Church in London, where he was organist from 1898-1923. He is perhaps best known as the composer of the RAF March Past.