

Grace Notes *Friday, May 21, 2021*



Dear friends:

As we reach the great Feast of Pentecost, we may be struggling to remember Easter. This year our liturgies of the Resurrection were limited, our opportunities to keep our usual family celebrations needed to be put on hold, and the ensuing weeks of the Easter season have continued what many see as a 'desert experience' as our parish churches have been locked down and reduced once again to streaming on-line services. The challenges of ongoing virtual schooling have contributed to the tiredness and malaise so many people feel in what we expect to be a season of joy; the timing of Victoria Day could possibly not have been better for many. It is important that we remember that even as we are restricted to home, we need to be intentional about taking time for Sabbath and be open to the gifts the Holy Spirit offers us.

We can imagine Jesus' disciples huddled inside and fearful, not sure to trust the promise the Lord had given them. Although the risks to us are very different, we can understand their uncertainty as we wonder whether to trust the officials who tell us that our circumstances are going to change.

We have spent much time over the past year considering those who feel outcast, excluded, marginalised in our society; the message of the Lectionary this weekend reminds us of our responsibilities as followers of Jesus.



First we hear of the events of that Pentecost Day, of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then we review the varieties of gifts brought to us by the Spirit and are reminded that unequivocally, we are baptised into one body of Christ without exception. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity,

faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a): not too much ambiguity there; these describe the behaviour to which we are called as Christians. I am always struck by noting that the stress is on love and joy. Tertullian, a Roman theologian, Church Father and historian who lived from 160 – 225 CE notes, "Look, **they say, 'how they [Christians] love one another'**" (Apologeticus ch. 39, sect. 7); this shows us that the Christians of the early Church took Jesus seriously as he had told them to "love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34). Loving as Jesus modelled should be a source of joy – especially if we allow the Holy Spirit to live and work in and through us. St Teresa of Avila wrote: "From silly devotions and sour-faced saints,

good Lord, deliver us” – which sounds a resonant chord with me as I look forward to the celebration of Mass.

As a cantor for the streamed Masses in my parish, it is perhaps the shared joy that I miss most – especially in the music. Singing alone and hoping that people are joining in at home is a challenge! I relate with the soloist singing this piece, as music in *liturgy* (which means roughly “the work of the people”) is meant to be communal and be a gift of the whole worshipping community to God. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhwxo2pvp5s> Unfortunately, I missed this sunrise recording of the choristers of Magdalen College, which should have been shared on May Day (May 1st), but it isn't too late to enjoy. (I have to admit to some chuckles as I watched the choristers climbing the tower before 6 AM and saw the resultant effects on some of the surplices.) I was once an Anglican chorister, complete with the little turkey frill around my neck and can still remember our choir mistress reminding us that people could hear our smiles. It's a message I continue to try to get across to those with whom I sing! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhwxo2pvp5s>



We are told that the disciples spoke with “new tongues” at that first Christian Pentecost¹, and perhaps we are called to do the same, to find new ways – loving and joyful ways – of speaking to and with each other, even those with whom we have differences, which give witness that we, too,

have seen the Lord, heard his message and choose to follow in his ways. It was also St Teresa who told us, “Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”; a Celtic rune reminds us “Often goes Christ in the stranger’s guise.”. And Jesus says, “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters you do to me.”

May your heart be inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost Sunday. And may we remember that, just like the message of Easter, it is meant for all year and our lifetime!

Wishing you an enjoyable long weekend and a blessed week!

Gillian



¹ Jewish Pentecost (Shavuot) was mentioned in last week’s Grace Notes