

Father, as we bring this bread and wine,
and remember his death and resurrection,
send your Holy Spirit,
that we who share these gifts
may be fed by Christ's body and his blood.

Pour your Spirit on us
that we may love one another,
work for the healing of the earth,
and share the good news of Jesus,
as we wait for his coming in glory.
For honour and praise belong to you, Father,
with Jesus your Son, and the Holy Spirit:
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Being made one by the power of the Spirit, let us pray with confidence
as our Saviour has taught us ...

**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.**

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us
your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal:
open our lips by your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the Spirit, who hovered over the waters when the world was created,
breathe into you the life he gives. **Amen.**
May the Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin when the eternal Son came
among us, make you joyful in the service of the Lord. **Amen.**
May the Spirit, who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost, bring
the world alive with the love of the risen Christ. **Amen.**
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

With the power of the Holy Spirit at work within you,
keep safe in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

St Margaret's Old Catton *Sunday worship*



31 May 2020

Pentecost

*this service can be found online at <https://youtu.be/wJYyWJo5EaQ>
You can also find it on 'A Church Near You' - look for St Margaret's Old Catton*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
and also with you.

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts
of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify
your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

As we wait in silence,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we listen to your word,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we worship you in majesty,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we long for your refreshing,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we long for your renewing,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we long for your equipping,
fill us with your Spirit.
As we long for your empowering,
fill us with your Spirit.



Let us pray

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world and knows our every word and deed.
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

The Pentecost Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

2

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This day we give you thanks
because in fulfilment of your promise
you pour out your Spirit upon us,
filling us with your gifts, leading us into all truth,
and uniting peoples of many tongues in the confession of one faith.
Your Spirit gives us grace to call you Father,
to proclaim your gospel to all nations
and to serve you as a royal priesthood.
Therefore we join our voices with angels and archangels,
and with all those in whom the Spirit dwells,
to proclaim the glory of your name,
for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Father, on the night before he died,
Jesus shared a meal with his friends.
He took the bread, and thanked you.
He broke it, and gave it to them, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this to remember me.

After the meal, Jesus took the cup of wine.
He thanked you, and gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood,
the new promise of God's unfailing love.
Do this to remember me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

7

There it is, the movement of the Holy Spirit, taking two people divided by prejudice and life experience and misunderstanding, who slowly find themselves being drawn together, made one, one in the Spirit of God.

In so many ways, the work of the Spirit seems ordinary, unremarkable, because he is there deep in the grain of life. But the Holy Spirit works to draw people together across differences of race or nation, of wealth or poverty, different religious beliefs, the awful wounds inflicted within families, among neighbours, within communities.

The Spirit hovers on an early summer day when you're overwhelmed by how good it is to be alive. And the Spirit stirs and moves when a piece of music carries you away. The Spirit is loose bringing new beginnings when lives seem stuck and empty. The Spirit can descend on someone feeling lost and alone after losing a job, on a family that has decided to go to work on its relationship. The Spirit can move within us, even when we have to be apart for a time, for the sake of the common good. And the Spirit helps us draw closer to Christ and to each other, to serve, to give, to connect.

Let us pray.

We pray for God to fill us with his Spirit.

O God, You are Spirit; You are wind; You are breath.

You meet us in the wonders of creation,
in the awe of wonderful things,
in the terror of fearful things.

You blow among the fallen leaves, the broken branches,
the whining pain and the whirlwinds of delight.

Your wind gently touches our brow
with comfort and caress;
your forgiveness raises us to life;
your challenge disturbs our tidy piles
and spreads opportunities before our eyes.

Gentle Spirit, breathe on us your life.
Strong Spirit, open our closed doors to your compassion;
Universal Spirit, inspire us to sing and sigh for justice;
Spirit of Jesus, teach us to walk,
to work, to pray, to live, to love, your way.

Awaken our dreams, expand our visions, heal us for hope,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

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**

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Gospel Reading

Alleluia, alleluia.

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
by the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, '*Receive the Holy Spirit.* If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Today is one of the high feasts of the church year, the Feast of Pentecost, the day we call the birthday of the church. We've just heard the strange, exotic story of tongues of flame, strong wind, and the miraculous gift of languages. The church was born in a whirlwind of energy and power that made timid, ordinary disciples into Spirit-filled agents of Christ's love.

I enjoy a good bonfire, and during the lockdown I've been doing a good deal of burning in our cottage garden that has got very overgrown over the years, and particularly burning tree roots that I have been digging up. Bonfires burn in different ways. Sometimes they blaze, if you're burning dry material, and sometimes they smoke if it's damp, but if there's a good heat in there, even a slow fire can go on for ages. And you can often come back the following day and start it all off again sprinkling dry leaves on the ashes and you're away. We are a bit like that in our own Christian lives. On Pentecost Sunday we tend to think of the Spirit burning brightly in the lives of disciples who so recently had been damp and timid, and sometimes we suppose that the only way to burn is to flame vigorously; but a fire that is smoking is also alight and may burn a lot of material over a few hours, and burst forth back into flame once the damp material has dried out. Under lockdown we feel as if the fire has gone out of our common life, but it hasn't. There's still a lot of fire beneath the surface, dispersed among our homes, which may burst into flame again when we are able to meet up.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit fills the house where the disciples are gathered, fills the disciples and fills their lives – so much so that people think they are drunk with new wine.

We read that the crowd are bewildered, as they hear the Word spoken to them in their own languages. We hear of Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cappodocians, Phrygians and Pamphylians and all the rest – a daunting list which means that nobody wants to be asked to read the lesson on Pentecost Sunday! But what this tells us is that the whole world is present at Pentecost. The gift of the Holy Spirit is for all people.

The disciples themselves were equally bewildered to find themselves on the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming the good news of Jesus. Only a few days previously they had been locked away in an upper room for fear of the authorities. At the Last Supper Jesus had promised his disciples that when he returned to the Father he would send them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and now the Spirit has come. The Spirit gives to those first disciples a confidence and a message of joy which they cannot contain or keep to themselves. For the Spirit is not given for them alone, but in order that the world might know that Jesus is risen and, as Peter says in his Pentecost sermon, so that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” The experience the disciples had must have been exhilarating and terrifying at the same time.

It is the same for us today. To invite the Spirit into our lives is not to ask for a gentle nudge. It is to ask him to stir up the fire within us, so that we may blaze with the love, joy and peace of Christ.

In the Anglican tradition, we like everything orderly, dignified. We have a leaflet to keep it all straight, so you can read and follow. But Pentecost tells us about a church that got started when things broke loose and people found themselves caught up in a life bigger and stranger than they had ever known.

The word for “spirit” also refers to breath? “Inspire” means to breathe into, “conspire” means to breathe with. What happens when we gather on Sundays is that the Holy Spirit breezes in and out among us, inspiring, conspiring, knitting us together as we sing our songs and pray our prayers. People who are separate become one, just as they did that first Pentecost. Something stirs in them and they find themselves being drawn into Christ, the Life at the heart of everything. It is poignant to have to be apart at the feast of Pentecost.

Pentecost is the story of God’s movement to heal what divides us, to heal the babble of divisions of race and nation, of haves and have nots, of gender and background, of our self-absorption. The healing Spirit that filled Jesus began to fill a whole people whose one mission was to undo the babble of the world by building the healing community that God has wanted for our world from the beginning. To be the church is to be Spirit people, conspiring to bring God’s healing of the world.

Talking about the Holy Spirit is one thing. But we’re meant to experience the Spirit. I am sure we’ve all experienced the Holy Spirit stirring in our lives, even if we weren’t aware of it. When the Spirit is moving, we don’t think about him; we’re just more alive, more aware of each other, of the

beauty of nature or music, of a striking act of forgiveness, or more moved by God’s passion for hope and healing.

I came across a short story by the American writer Raymond Carver from the 1980s called “Cathedral,” this week. And I wondered if, even though the Spirit is never mentioned he is perhaps the source of a strange transformation. The speaker in the story is a gloomy, insecure, cynical man who’s so unpleasant that it’s clear, he doesn’t have a friend in the world. As the story opens he’s really irritated, because an old friend of his wife is coming for a visit. The husband doesn’t like anyone, but he’s especially irritated that the man coming to visit happens to be blind.

In fact the husband is appalled at having to waste time around this blind man. He makes wise cracks. “Maybe I could take him bowling,” he says. He tries to imagine what it would be like to be married to a blind man, and he finds it all, as he says, too “pitiful” to think about.

Well, the friend arrives, and things are awkward. The husband is surprised he doesn’t wear dark glasses and use a cane. He studies the man’s every move. The meal is awkward and punctuated by long silences. Eventually the two men end up in front of the television, having a drink, not knowing what to say.

On the TV is a programme about cathedrals, and slowly the men start talking about them. “Something has occurred to me,” the husband says, “Do you have any idea what a cathedral is? What they look like, that is?” “Not much,” the blind man replies. And the more they talk the more engaged they slowly become with each other and this odd subject of cathedrals.

Then the blind man has an idea—that the husband get some paper and a pen, and they sit down on the floor in front of the coffee table while the husband draws a cathedral. They do that, and as the husband draws the blind man rests his hand on top of the husband’s. “Go ahead, draw,” he says. “You’ll see. I’ll follow along with you.” And so the husband begins to draw, and the two hands move together.

“You’re doing fine,” the blind man says. “Never thought anything like this could happen in your lifetime, did you?” And so the husband draws arches, windows, flying buttresses. And on it goes. “You got it, I can tell. You didn’t think you could. But you can, can’t you? We’re going to really have us something here in a minute.”

“So we kept on with it,” the husband says. “It was like nothing else in my life up to now.”

Then the picture is done. “What do you think?” the blind man asks.

Now, as the story ends, the husband’s eyes are still closed. “Well?” the blind man says. “Are you looking?”

“My eyes were still closed,” the husband says. “I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn’t feel inside of anything.”

Then he says to the blind man, “It’s really something.”