

## Reflection for the Week: 1st -7th June, 2020

### **Pentecost**

***‘They saw what seemed to be tongues of flame that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.’ Acts 2: 3-4***

At Sunday school, many years ago, we used to cut out strips of orange tissue paper and attach them to sticks, then wave them around while singing a hymn or song. This was in the days prior to risk assessments and the perceived danger of poking somebody’s eye out! In fact, I knew it as ‘Whit Sunday’, the Sunday when we made the flame sticks.

Whit – short for ‘White’- Sunday was so called because it was the day when traditionally, many baptisms were performed, linking the gift of the Spirit to the whole Church with the gift of the Spirit to individuals. Baptismal candidates wore white as a sign of purity. I am consistently reminded that the liturgical colour for this day is red, symbolic of the tongues of flame that rested on the disciples.

Pentecost is sometimes described as the ‘birthday of the Church’. Pentecost marks the end of the period of waiting, of reflection and doubt turning into conviction and expectancy, and it heralds the mission of the disciples from the cover of the Upper Room into the unpredictable and risky territory of public proclamation.

Pentecost is less about flame sticks and more about transformation. The disciples were transformed in the Spirit, with a new sense of power and excitement, and with incredible courage. It is the barrier-breaking miracle of the Gospel, which here symbolically abolishes the obstacle of language. The symbolism is important. Separation and alienation between peoples was the punishment for human pride in the story of the Tower of Babel. Pentecost reverses Babel; people are reunited. They can now reach God, not through the tall tower of their own efforts and devising, but through the Spirit of God within them.

In Trumpington there are people from all over the globe who speak different languages. But language is more than words – it is about communication – and we can still communicate care and kindness to those whose language we do not share. One of the messages of Pentecost is that there can be unity in diversity. Another message is the Spirit’s power of transforming grace; the Holy Spirit can transform us and use us in the service of God’s Kingdom in ways we might never have thought possible. This week, pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit both in your life and in the lives of those you love and pray for.

