

Dear Friends

Easter seems rather a long time ago now. By the time we get to June we are looking towards holidays and many of our young people are in the middle of exams. But for the Church the season of Easter has changed into the season of Ascensiontide, for at the end of May this year we celebrated the Ascension (30th). The Ascension must have been a strange time for the first disciples. It is always portrayed to us as a joyous occasion, but I wonder if they had rather mixed emotions: joy, certainly, but also some sadness and bewilderment as they had to accept they would not see Jesus again as they had done.

Yes, they had a mission to fulfil: to go and spread the Good News and be his witnesses, but they were still feeling a bit bewildered and out of their depth and how they could possibly carry out such a task.

Jesus had promised them that he would send them a 'helper' – but how? and what would this 'helper' be like? Another Jesus? No – the promised 'helper' was to be the Holy Spirit, that same almighty and powerful Spirit that was with God in the beginning of creation, which we read of in Genesis; that same Spirit that is at work all the time, acting in Jesus for and with God. This Spirit was to help them in a powerful way in their joint mission to spread the word and to call everyone back to God.

When the Holy Spirit did come that first Pentecost it was a very profound event. We read in the book of Acts that tongues of fire could be seen on the apostle's heads; languages from far and wide were spoken and understood by all. Power happened in a very big way; lives were changed and the Christian Church was born.

This year Pentecost is 9th June and just as the disciples did all those years ago, I invite you to pray in this time over the 10 days from Ascension Day leading up to Pentecost.

Let us all pray for the power of the Holy Spirit:

- to help and empower us to deepen our faith and understanding so that we can tell others of God's love and be his witnesses in our world,
- to spread God's word and love again in what we say and do,
- to give us strength and courage to stand up as Christians among the secularism of today;

- to re-energise us and renew us in God's service in the Church and in our communities,
- to be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5).

With every blessing

Kate

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