

Pentecost ('20)

- I couldn't help but think of the similarities between the social isolation & distancing that we have been living, & the lockdown of many people around the world, not knowing what to do, not how long this will last, or what will change when all this comes to some conclusion, with the 'lockdown' of the disciples in the period of time that they were left alone after the Ascension, & the coming of the Spirit.
- Before the coming of the Spirit, the disciples (men & women) were virtually living in hiding in the upper room.
- A great task had been entrusted to them, yet they had neither the strength nor the will or imagination to begin it, but after Pentecost they were changed people – they were able to proclaim the Good News about Jesus in ways that everyone could understand because it resonated with their lives.
- What was it that the Holy Spirit did to them, & how did the miracle of change come about?
- Even though we are dealing with mystery, that doesn't mean we can't understand anything about it.
- We have to realise that the apostles were wounded people.
- They were wounded by doubt & grief, by fear & failure, & above all by a sense of inadequacy & not knowing what to do.
- But after the coming of the Spirit they were changed people.
- They left their hiding place, & set out courageously to preach the good news about Jesus Christ.
- I don't think that the change was affected in an instant.
- It had to be a gradual thing, a growth process.
- And growth can be slow & painful.
- We do not easily let go of old habits & attitudes.
- People change when they are given hope; when someone believes in them, & gives them a task to do; above all, they change when they are loved; they come out of their shells, & hidden energies are released in them.
- The miracle of human change is the real miracle of Pentecost.
- All of us have a capacity for goodness - we have hands that can care, eyes that can see, ears that can hear, tongues that can speak, feet that can walk, & above all hearts that can love.
- But each of us has some handicaps, which keep us from realising our true & full selves - we need someone to awaken us to what is inside us.
- Someone who will enable us to truly live, & help us grow.
- For us followers of Jesus, that someone is the Holy Spirit.
- The power that changed the apostles is available to us too, the gentle power of the Holy Spirit.
- The work of the Holy Spirit did not begin and end on the day of Pentecost.
- The Holy Spirit is alive and well and working in the Church & the world right down to the present day and he will continue his work till the end of time.

- We have to have confidence and realize that, whatever transitions we are going through, this is not because the Holy Spirit has gone away.
- In fact times of crises like the locked doors imposed on us by the Coronavirus can be the fertile soil of new developments and we have to listen to the promptings of the Spirit who calls us to exercise creative imagination.
- Our lockdown time in the Upper Room of this pandemic affords all of us an opportunity to change & allow the Spirit to draw out of us what is the best in us & enable that Spirit to empower us to make changes in our own lives & the lives we touch.
- This is a crucial time, as it was for the disciples, to discern what God is calling us to be & do – as individuals, as nations & as a global community.
- Things don't have to be the same as they were before, & in fact that is the temptation, to go back to living the ways we have.
- Things will never be the same again, so the question is – what are the changes that need to be made in my own life & relationships, what are the decisions for change we will make as a church, as a global community, & in relationship with our environment.
- Things cannot continue to be the way they have.
- The Upper Room for the disciples & for us in our current Upper Room is a grace-filled moment of history.
- And the decisions we make now will have an import for the rest of our lives.
- Do we allow the Spirit at this time to engage our minds & hearts to review & re-evaluate how we have lived on the treadmill of life, doing the same old things without really thinking & not leaving room for change in our lives?
- This is a time when we are particularly reliant on making good choices for the future & some of the world leaders will be written about in books to come, of the short-sighted, ignorant decisions they have taken that have had disastrous consequences for humanity.
- Let's use the opportunity we have now to make informed changes for ourselves & our relationships for the future.
- The Spirit is still with us and will undoubtedly guide us through the difficulties ahead, if we are prepared to listen and not just hold onto things as they were.
- And the Holy Spirit accompanies us in our pilgrimage through life, guiding us through life's transitions and the many vicissitudes we experience.
- It is at the moments when our faith is challenged and tested that we most need to turn to the Holy Spirit and pray for his guidance and ask for the gift of discernment to help us make the right choices - choices that will lead us forward, choices that will bring us closer to God, choices that will bring our human potential to its fulfillment.
- Pentecost is the Miracle of human change, when people allow the power of God's Spirit to lead them to do things which otherwise they may fear.
- Pentecost is about God's Spirit changing people now.