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Homily at Mass Pentecost Sunday, Year C – 9 June 2019

The 75th anniversary of the D Day landings on the coast of France, heralding the end of World War II on Thursday. Thursday was also ‘A’ Day for us – a beautiful day spent with our parish patron St Anthony. We were glad to welcome 2 precious relics of St Anthony and 2 Franciscans who accompanied the relics, especially Fr Mario who spoke about St Anthony and the **connection** we make with him by touching his relics with our hands.

Today is the great day of Pentecost. 50 days since the day of Our Lord’s Resurrection from the dead. 90 days since Ash Wednesday. Together we have walked the path of penance, prayer, charity, mercy during Lent. Together we have bathed in the light of the Risen Christ, still burning brightly from the Easter Candle. “We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song” St Augustine says. The two Hebrew words, “Hallel Yah” literally mean “Praise God”. We greet and welcome Christ in his Gospel each Sunday with a joyful Alleluia. Today the Church sends us once again on our daily mission of family life, work, friendship and service with “Alleluia”. Let’s keep singing it in everything we do this week.

A lady once told me that she had grown up knowing God the Father in her prayers and Jesus the Son of God in the Eucharist but it was of her involvement with the Charismatic Renewal that introduced her to the Holy Spirit. All of us could probably say much the same thing. It’s easy to imagine God – the Father is often depicted as an old man. It’s certainly easy for us to imagine or see Jesus in our minds: we’re familiar with his Cross, we see him depicted as a baby in the Christmas crib, many of us have an image of Christ – perhaps the Sacred Heart – in our homes or a favourite holy picture. But the Holy Spirit – how do we see him? The Gospels present him as the dove who settled on Jesus at his Baptism, as well as the mysterious cloud that surrounded Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, Peter, James and John on Mt Tabor at the Transfiguration. St Luke’s dramatic account of Pentecost presents the Holy Spirit as a mighty wind and tongues of flame as well as the courage and new found eloquence of the apostles who began the preaching of the Gospel on the streets of Jerusalem today.

All of us – baptised and confirmed – have received the Holy Spirit in the sweet perfumed oil of Sacred Chrism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Sacred Chrism, just as we speak Christ is present in the Eucharist. When you and I were anointed with Sacred Chrism at Baptism (on the crown of the head) and the forehead at Confirmation, we – literally – received the Holy Spirit. He made his home with us to stay, a light on our minds, his warm and gentle presence in our hearts always. He is at home in each of us **now**.

Jesus uses various words to speak of the Holy Spirit. We heard one today. “Advocate”. The word Advocate means “spokesman” – someone who speaks on behalf of another, with all their authority. In court a barrister or solicitor speaks on our behalf before the judge, representing us. The Holy Spirit speaks on God’s behalf, “he will remind you of all I have said to you” Jesus promises. The Holy Spirit sheds light on our minds that we remember the truth of Faith; that we feel prompted to acts of charity; he inspires our prayer; he sustains our joy in Christian life; he enlivens our worship; he gives conviction to the Word of God proclaimed at Mass; he helps each of us say ‘yes’ to the Faith we believe and try to live and share each day.

Jesus also speaks of the Holy Spirit the Consoler. You and I could add Friend, Comforter, God’s Gift, the Giver of Life, Peace, Joy, Courage, Strength, Love.

When I think of the Holy Spirit, I like to think of him as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. This love is so intense, so powerful, so real that it is more than an affection or an emotion – the Holy Spirit is a person, a reality, he is God. And within this bond of love – between the Father and the Son – God embraces you and me. The Holy Spirit makes us – you and me – sons and daughters of God: we share the Father’s love in Christ’s saving love in the bond of love the Holy Spirit. Let’s try to feel that love now –

- The Father’s warm embrace
- The strong hand of friendship, the hands of Christ still marked with the sign of the nails
- The fire and warm breath of the Holy Spirit, warming our hearts, giving us peace of mind, filling us with joy

This is a prayer of St Anthony for Pentecost:

May He who poured out His grace
on the Apostles at Pentecost
as tongues of fire,
deign also to pour His grace into us.
To Him be praise and glory always throughout all the ages. Amen.