

Sermon for 4.6.17

Today we celebrate the day of Pentecost. The time of great change – the time when the Holy Spirit entered the earthly realm to remain to the end of the age. God is with us.

In our worship service the liturgical colour also changes.

We move from white, traditionally the symbol of purity and joy that we have worn throughout Easter tide, to red, a reminder of the fire- like divided tongues that landed on the disciples that first Pentecost.

Tomorrow the liturgical colour will be green which symbolizes the sacred yet ordinary season of the church calendar.

One well known theologian suggests that to understand what Pentecost really is, we must first recognize that Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost - all those *once for all* events which we celebrate in the great festivals of Christendom – are so closely interconnected that they merely represent one and the same event of salvation.

The festivals, all spaced in time are the structure of one single deed of God performed in history upon humanity.

Pentecost was the culmination of the entire salvation event.

The Holy Spirit springs up out of the death and resurrection by which the Lord is taken away from the world in the glory of the ascension.

If Jesus is not glorified, the Spirit is not given.

In John's gospel we hear: "As yet the spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified".

The spirit is only poured out because Jesus, gloriously ascended - has overcome the world.

Now this raises the question for many of us.

What does this mean that Jesus has overcome the world? How is this so?

The world is still a dangerous place – in fact it becomes more dangerous as the years pass.

The future looks bleak – historically the world has always had wars, country against country, but now we're under threat from within our own society.

There are no identifiable boundaries any more.

And then there is the state of the world's ecology and our historic lack of care, awareness and exploitation coming home to roost.

And we could go on and on here in a negative way – because this is all quite right –but, since God's salvation act, there is nothing that can alter the truth, and the sheer effect of that truth in the presence of God continually among us in the world in the Holy Spirit.

The salvation event, was not just a passing phase in the history of the world.

God is with us continually, accompanying, guiding and sustaining.

The risks in life and the suffering remain, as does our personal awareness of our own failures and weaknesses - it simply happens that way.

God's presence in the world however, does tell us that there is more going on in the world than what we know.

God is continually at work here.

There is a deeper level of reality in the world, where love and transformation are ceaselessly at work.

We live in a world that is filled with the gifts of the Spirit each working personally and corporately for the common good.

With an outlook such as this, there comes a settling feeling that it is not all down to us, and it can allow us to be honest about our own capabilities and incapability's.

It can also convince us that our lives are not about making our selves self-sufficient or self-controlling, but rather about making ourselves more open and able to receive from God through the intimacy of relationship that we are invited into.

Now this way is not easy for us when we are focused on being self-sufficient or cluttered with anxiety, worry or vanity or resentment – usually there is little

room for anything else – but we can make room through quiet time and non-judgemental reflection while opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit's tenderness, comfort and guidance.

This is one of the many blessings and wonders of the salvation history of the Christian faith. By it, we enter a new way of being in which we can work, and be in peace at the same time, for we know that God's grace in love and mercy is in us, over us and beneath us.

In today's Eucharistic prayer, I will give thanks that in fulfilment of God's promise, God pours forth his Spirit among us, filling us the gifts and leading us into all truth.

God gives us power to proclaim the gospel to all nations and to serve God as a royal priesthood.

This is what we celebrate today - the day of Pentecost, the presence of God in the world empowering us till the end of the age.

God is with us. The Lord be with you.