

Pentecost

I was among the 1300 or so people who filled St. Francis Xavier Cathedral on Monday last to celebrate the Funeral Mass for Archbishop Len Faulkner. That I rearrange my holidays a little to be there was an easy choice to make.

Archbishop Faulkner was very much a man who called upon the Holy Spirit to guide him throughout his life. He continued the work of those whom Jesus breathed upon on Easter Sunday evening. "Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained." Archbishop Len knew that Jesus was not just talking about what happens in the confessional. His whole life was one of reconciliation, of bringing people into a new or deeper relationship with God and with one another. Archbishop Len modelled a way of shared leadership that drew upon the gifts of clergy, religious and laity together.

What we hear today from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians was something that Archbishop Len put into practice. "There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose." Archbishop Len was very conscious of the fact that God didn't gift him with all the gifts that were needed to govern the Archdiocese well. He called upon others to work with him and to use the gifts that God had given to them for the sake of the people that they served. I think this is a model that we can all learn from. There is nothing in the Church that we can do completely by ourselves. We need to know how to work well with others.

Much of my holidays was spent walking in the bush looking out for any birds I might see and photograph. I enjoyed doing that very much. But perhaps what I enjoyed most was spending time in the bird hides of Gluepot watching birds come in for a drink and a bath. I was able to delight in seeing them close up through the binoculars, watching them interact with each other, watching them enjoying their baths. In

a way I was able to see that each bird was unique, gifted by God. There were even moments when I could hear God saying that to me about myself. In the quiet of those bird hides I could hear God reminding me of the gifts that God has given to me. On this Pentecost Sunday I hope that we might all give God time enough to reaffirm how gifted each one of us is. I pray that we may all recognize something of the way that God's Spirit is at work in each of us.

Our reading from the Acts of the Apostles recalls what happened when the Spirit came upon the apostles at Pentecost. It sounded like a powerful wind. It reminds us of the breath of God in the story of creation. Something appeared that seemed like tongues of fire, and these separated and rested on each of them. God appeared to Moses in the form of fire. God was there in the burning bush that was not consumed. God's presence was seen as a cloud by day and a fire by night as God led the chosen people through the desert.

On Pentecost morning it was fire that signaled the gift of God's Spirit being poured into the hearts of the disciples of Jesus. Filled with God's Spirit they began to speak foreign languages. But the different languages were not for their sake, but for the sake of the people who were gathered in Jerusalem at that time. No matter where they came from, they could hear the message that the apostles spoke to them about Jesus. At that moment the confusion that followed the building of the tower of Babel was healed. People who were divided by a multitude of languages were made one people again.

We are part of that one people of God today as we celebrate God's gift of his Spirit to us his Church. Like the first apostles we are being sent out as witnesses for Jesus. We bear witness to the truth of who Jesus is by the way that we live in union with Jesus. We speak to others about Jesus by the good things that we do in his name. We speak about Jesus because we have seen how Jesus is at work in our lives and in the lives of others. We and the Holy Spirit living within us witness together of the love that our God has for all who live in our world. Others will see that we are trustworthy witnesses, not by the words that we say, but by the things that we do.