

Pentecost

During the week we celebrated the Funeral of Brian Voumard. It was a great celebration for a man who lived his life so unselfishly for others. People came from all around the state, from the communities where Brian had lived and worked. Brian allowed the gifts of God's Spirit to be generously at work in him as he went about his service of others. I think of him today as we celebrate Pentecost. Brian was a great witness for Jesus' continuing presence in our world.

Jesus talks about witnesses in our gospel today. "When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness." Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will speak the truth to us about Jesus. The Spirit will remind us of what Jesus said and did. And like someone who knows us well, the Spirit will know what truth we need to hear in the changing situations of our lives.

How we see the Church and our part in it changes. The young people who have been taking part in the Kid's Fun Day this weekend have been thinking about Pentecost as the birthday of the Church and how we can celebrate the birthday party. Birthday parties may not be so important for us as we get older. But birthdays are still important milestones that give us the opportunity to reflect and give thanks for how we have been gifted over

the years. Today's birthday of the Church gives us the opportunity to give thanks for how we have been gifted by God and by one another because we are the Church.

Jesus tells us today, "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth. And he will tell you of the things to come." For God there is no past or future, but only the present. But for us it is not so. We know that we can only live one moment at a time; but the past is very important to us. The memory of what has happened in the past forms us. The people we have known have shaped us. What we learnt yesterday helps us to meet the challenges that tomorrow may bring. The hopes that we have for the future determine the choices that we make today. But it is the Spirit that lives within us each day that helps us to live each day well. God's Spirit of truth is always teaching us what is true and good and loving. God's Spirit helps us to know what to do now.

St. Paul speaks to us about some of the ways that the Spirit influences our lives. He tells us first that self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit. He lists some of the results of self-indulgence. If we are only thinking about ourselves there is no limit to the ways that we might be hurting other people. What the Spirit brings, he says, is very different: "love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-

control.” Those things are what are sometimes called the fruits of the Spirit. They come about because we allow the Spirit of Jesus to shape us and influence what we do every day.

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. God breathed over the water and life came. 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 lead 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 the apostle’s 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.

We may not all have the generosity of heart of people like Brian Voumard, but we all have a share of the same Spirit that moved him to act. On this Pentecost Sunday we pray that we may open our hearts to that Spirit in an even fully way so that Jesus may make us into those witnesses that he sends us out to be.