

Pentecost (Sunday morning)

Our celebration of Pentecost this year is a little different. Our focus is upon Matilda and Zoe who will begin their initiation into the life of faith of our community. In a few moments I will call upon the Holy Spirit to come down upon the water with which they will be baptised. It was at the Baptism of Jesus that the Spirit descended upon him and gave him his mission to make known the love that our God has for us. It was at Pentecost that the Spirit descended upon the disciples of Jesus to give them their mission of continuing the work of Jesus. The Spirit transformed them as the Spirit will transform Matilda and Zoe.

The first effect of the transformation of the apostles was their ability to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech. People from all over the known world could hear them speaking in their own language about what Luke calls “the marvels of God”. I get a bit dizzy trying to imagine how twelve men could be understood by people who must have had at least three times that number of different languages. I like to think of the Spirit at work in the ears, minds and hearts of all those people listening so that they could understand whatever any individual may have been saying to them. Their ability to understand what the apostles were saying seemed to be the thing that had the biggest impact upon them.

But surely this is one of the greatest gifts of the Spirit for you and me. The Spirit opens our ears to be able to hear God’s Word being spoken to us, no matter who may be speaking that word. The Spirit opens our minds to what our God may want us to hear, no matter how that word may be coming to us. One of the greatest gifts we can ask the Spirit to give to us is the gift of being good listeners. The Spirit can help us all to be more attentive to other people; to be more respectful of the wisdom that they have to offer us.

In preparation for the World Gathering of Families in Rome later this month a reflection on the elderly and grandparents was published by the Archdiocese of Rome and the Dicastery of the Laity. What is published reflects a little of what Pope Francis has been sharing at his Wednesday Audiences over the last few months. “Even grandparents and the elderly are part of our families. Today a prevailing throwaway culture tends to consider the elderly unimportant and even insignificant for society. Old age, on the other hand, is a further time to respond to God’s call. It is certainly a new, different and in some respects even more adult and mature response. The vocation to love is a call that God makes to us at every stage of our life. This means that grandparents and the elderly are also called to live the grace of their relationship with the Lord, through relationships with

children, grandchildren, young people and children. The response to this call is articulated in two directions: one is given by what they can offer to others through their experience, their patience and their wisdom; the other from what they can receive from others in their condition of fragility, weakness and need. In this way, the elderly offer themselves and those who come into contact with them a further opportunity for human, authentic and mature growth".

The grandparents of Matilda and Zoe may not think of themselves as being elderly, but they do know that they will have a special role in the lives of their grandchildren. They will be called upon to share their wisdom and their faith with their grandchildren.

When we become more reflective we can discover the truth of what Jesus is saying to us in the gospel. "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my father will love him and we shall come to him and make our home with him." To know that God chooses to dwell within us, to be in relationship with us, is so important isn't it. As we grow older we come to understand that relationships are much more important than anything we might have achieved. We learn bit by bit that it is who we are and not what we do that really matters.

For much of our lives we are so busy worrying about what we need to do, that we don't attend to who we are. We don't attend to who we are as sons and daughters of God, loved by God without condition. We don't attend to who we are as people filled with God's Spirit of love so that we can live in loving relationships with others.

In St. Paul's letter to the Romans today we hear him urging us to be attentive to the spiritual rather than the unspiritual part of us. "People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests however, are not in the unspiritual but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him." Paul goes on to say that it is God's Spirit within us that makes us cry out "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God."

This Pentecost Sunday we can celebrate who we are. We can thank God that we are sons and daughters of God. We can thank God that together we are the people that we call the Church. It is only when we know who we are that we can begin to take up our mission of proclaiming the marvels of God in the way that the first disciples of Jesus did on Pentecost Sunday.