

8 June 2025 - Matins

Readings: Exodus 33.7-20 and 2 Corinthians 3.4-end

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Today, as we mark fifty days since Easter Day, we celebrate the third great Feast of the Christian Church: The Feast of Pentecost. This day invites us to reflect on and rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, God's Spirit was poured out on believers, granting gifts to build up the Church and enabling a transformation beyond our imagination. This transformation is made possible through the gifts of the Spirit—and it invites our faithful response to become participants in the hope and transformation the Spirit brings.

Hope and transformation. These words not only reflect the power of God's Spirit, but also echo our deep longing in a world overshadowed by uncertainty, injustice and division. Wherever we turn, we are confronted with troubling scenes and dehumanising language directed at those simply trying to survive, often resulting in violence. Finding hope and transformation in such a world can seem daunting. But as Christians, our faith in God's peace and our love for our neighbours empower us to persist in seeking that transformation. This persistence is made possible by the gift of the Spirit and by our willingness to work with the Spirit in faith and action.

St Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, reminds us that "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." These qualities can grow within us thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit. When I reflect on these, I am reminded that these are like the missing pieces of the puzzle to build up a beautiful world.

Perhaps through an examination of these qualities in ourselves, through honest self-reflection, and by encouraging one another whenever we see these qualities lived out, we can draw closer to God as His Church. But again, this requires action; action rooted in God's Word and a turning toward Christ, not simply waiting passively for the Spirit to do all the work. When was the last time you told someone that their joy transformed you, and brought you closer to God? And I ask myself a similar question now. When was the last time I thanked our morning prayer group for their faithfulness, and for filling the start of my days with meaning?

The fruits of the Spirit should be celebrated in each of us. Our gifts need to be celebrated. It may seem such small acts won't change the world's great problems, but might they not bring hope and transformation, even in small but powerful ways?

Self-reflection is a vital part of the Christian life. Examining our lives, beliefs, and actions in the light of God's Word. And we must admit, this is not always easy. It can be deeply challenging. We all carry prejudices. Prejudices that the world has taught us, shaped by the brokenness of the world around us. These biases can be directed toward different groups of people; different languages, or even difference itself. But again, these prejudices do not come from the Spirit. They are not of God.

For us Christians, inclusion is not a passing trend or a political slogan. On the contrary, is at the very heart of our faith, reflecting the radical welcome of Christ.

Difference can be unsettling; because we are taught to fear it: different people; different political views; different ways of interpreting the world. And yet consider today's readings. Many of us didn't understand the words being spoken—they were read in different languages. But rather than feeling afraid or alienated or angry, many of us were moved, perhaps even filled with admiration. Because they were God's words and we trusted in one another, in our Church, and in the Scriptures. So why not carry that trust further, into our relationship with the world? Let us reflect on the experience of those who were in Jerusalem, who heard the disciples speaking in many languages. Languages that were different, yet familiar. These differences did not divide, they united. Through the power of the Spirit, diversity became a source of connection, not conflict. It built up the Church in unity and love.

In today's lessons, there is a strong emphasis on our responsibilities. In both lessons, we are reminded that, as God's people, we are called to act.

In our first lesson, we hear Moses expressing his deep desire to know God more intimately. He pleads, "Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight." "Show me your ways." This humble request beautifully captures Moses' longing to understand how God relates to humanity and to live in a way that pleases Him. Moses also asks for God's presence among his people. He then asks to see him, by saying "Show me your glory, I pray."

God responds to Moses' requests, also granting him a partial glimpse of His glory. This intimate relationship between God and Moses is made possible by divine grace, yet it also reflects Moses' faithful obedience and persistent advocacy for his people. The restoration of God's presence among them is ultimately a gift of grace, but it is also shaped by Moses' role as mediator, and his actions.

In our second lesson, St Paul's words speak to us too. He reminds us that whatever competence we have in our ministry comes from God. He writes, "our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant..." If we pay close attention to the second half of this verse, our responsibility becomes clear: we are made competent to be ministers of the new covenant. So, we have a responsibility to minister; to proclaim the Word and live out the Gospel. Only by doing so can honour the competence that comes from God. And if competence is coming from God, and we work with it, should that not fill us with joy—because we are so close to God?

As Christians, we believe that together, by the power of the Spirit, we can help change the world, bringing it closer to God's Kingdom. The more we allow the Spirit to transform us, the more we become agents of that transformation. As we change, and work with the Spirit who is always moving in us and in the world, the world itself begins to change. We should cling to Christian hope. We are equipped to share the Gospel; we have access to God through Jesus Christ. But these gifts that the Holy Spirit fills us with, require our response—our actions, time, and our focus.

So, when we leave the Church today, let us be grateful for the gift of the Spirit that we have. Let us also pay attention to the gifts that others have. Let us make each other's gifts visible and let us tell one another how their gifts—and the way they use them, illuminate our lives and our journeys of faith. And may we carry the fire of Pentecost in our hearts.