Pentecost Sunday 2025

Last Monday, the British Prime Minister, when announcing security plans for the country, said, “The threat we face is more serious, more unpredictable, and more urgent than during the Cold War”. The most worrying feature of the “Cold War” period, 1947 – 1991, was the nuclear arms race, and the development of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, the nuclear threat overshadows the world to this day.

You may well consider the following an impractical question, but have you ever wondered how extraordinary it would be, if there could be an explosion in the world, the fall-out from which would cause, not mass destruction, but the opposite, the reconstruction of a world in which people would live in a spirit of fraternity and love?

Yet, such a consideration may not be as impractical as it first appears – has not Jesus Christ triggered such a world-changing event! The Welsh poet, R.S. Thomas, in his poem, “Nuclear”, writes,

“What word so explosive

as that one Palestinian

word with the endlessness of its fall-out?”

We can claim that being a Christian is an encounter with an event, with a person, which gives life a whole new outlook! *(cf Benedict XV1, DCE).*

The initial experience of the disciples can be described as “fifty days that changed the world”! First there was the apparent disaster of Good Friday; then the shock of Easter Sunday; the days that followed were days of tension, and often of fear-filled uncertainty. Then on the fiftieth day, the great explosion! And this was followed by “the endlessness of its fall-out”! Pentecost was the day of that great explosion! The Holy Spirit burst upon the lives of the disciples as, “*“a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house”.*

This fall-out began with *“Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome – Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and Arabs”*; and has continued down through every generation, and across every continent. We too have breathed in the fall-out of that extraordinary event!

On the day of Pentecost, St Peter, having preached his first sermon, was asked by those listening to him, *“What must we do?”* Peter replied, *“you must be baptised…..and you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts2:38).* You and I have been baptised; we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we have absorbed the fall-out of the Jesus Christ event. St Paul explained it this way*, “the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us” (Rom.5:5)*.

But what difference has baptism made in our lives? What is the effect of the Holy Spirit in our everyday life? Why, having received this amazing gift do we frequently live as though unaware of it? It is as if we only know of our baptism by hearsay, and not by personal experience.

Yet, we can be sure of this, the divine gift poured into our hearts is always there – God never recalls it, no matter what happens in our lives! It may, however, remain hidden, buried beneath self-love and a multitude of other distractions and false ambitions. Even so, the Holy Spirit often breaks through our lethargy, and guides, bears witness, prays, teaches, speaks, converts, inspires, and directs us.

Some say that the Holy Spirit is God whispering in the human heart. Gerard Manley Hopkins, in one of his poems writes, *“Speak! Whisper to my watching heart one word – as when a mother speaks soft” (Nondum)*. That word, sounding in our hearts, often moves us to choose to do good and to avoid evil. It informs us that, before God, this is good, true and right, and that is bad, false and wrong. *(cf CCC 1776)*

On this Feast of Pentecost, a pertinent question to ask is, “can we detect the fall-out of that explosion we name as Jesus Christ?” The expectation is that, if we have inhaled the results of that fall-out, then it will be exhaled as charity and good works.

What can we say of our own parish? Surely we would want to claim that here all are welcome, it is a place of spiritual healing; a helping hand is reached out to those in need of material support, at home or in faraway places; children and young people are safeguarded, come to know God as a loving Father, and Jesus Christ as a gentle brother; the sick are cherished, and the struggling find new purpose? Here, each of us brings our own small faith and discovers, that, energized by the breath of God, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Here we know we belong, whoever we are, whatever our situation, for we are one family, God’s family!

Of course, this doesn’t describe us all of the time, but does it not for a remarkable amount of the time? Within our community we experience that of which R.S.Thomas writes,

“What word so explosive

as that one Palestinian

word with the endlessness of its fall-out?”

“C*ome Holy Spirit,*

*make us ever more aware that Jesus walks with us,*

*speaks with us. breathes with us, works with us;*

*may the spirit of Jesus, alive within us,*

*be in the midst of all we do,*

*that the world may know*

*that we are believers who really believe” (cf EG 266).* **Amen.**