

## PENTECOST SUNDAY

Pentecost is the day when, true to his promise, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles. The coming of the Spirit changed the apostles and saw the launching of a new community (the Church). This day renews the gift of the Spirit in each of us and in the Church as a whole. *Pentecost is often considered the birthday of the church.* On Pentecost, we celebrate the church "**going public.**" **The church going public, meant to minister to different nations. People of different nationalities and different languages had to hear the word of God.**

**The first reading today from the Acts of the apostles says...** *"The apostles asked in utter amazement, 'Are not all these men Galileans? How is it that each of us hears them in his native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. We live in Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, the province of Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt and regions around Cyrene. There are even visitors from Rome....Yet each of us hears them speaking...about the marvels God has accomplished. "*

Language is a great tool of communication. If you are in a country where you are unable to speak the language, you feel lost. You have great difficulty in communicating with people. How happy you are when you finally meet someone who understands your language.

For the most part it is by means of words that human beings express their needs, laws, transactions, intentions, thoughts, emotions, longings, hopes, and creeds. Yet words are such elusive symbols. How rarely a simple statement conveys the same meaning to two people.

Language of itself is not enough to bring people together. In fact, as the Little Prince said, 'words are a source of misunderstanding.' Just because we use the same language doesn't mean we are one. There may still not be a meeting of minds and hearts.

But the opposite can happen too. People may speak different languages, they may be strangers to one another, yet a bond can be created among them, so that they become not only comrades, but brothers and sisters. On the day of a great joy, or a great sorrow, or a great danger for a community or a country, differences of language are swept aside. We stand shoulder to shoulder. We find ourselves of one mind and one heart.

**There are other ways of communicating besides words.** So important are signs and symbols that perhaps only twenty per cent of communication **happens** through words. In St Luke's account of Pentecost we find two powerful symbols — wind and fire, both symbols of energy. Still, language is hugely important. We are told that on Pentecost day everyone understood the apostles. It wasn't that they spoke a completely it new language. It was one all of us are familiar with but which, alas, we tend to forget or leave unused.

**What was this new language?** It was the language of peace rather than of war; the language of reconciliation rather than of conflict; the language of co-operation rather than of competition; the language of forgiveness rather than of vengeance; the language of hope rather than of despair; the language of tolerance rather than of bigotry; the language of friendship rather than of hostility; the language of unity rather than of division; the language of love rather than of hate.

This 'new' language gave rise to a new community, the community of those who believed in Jesus — a community of faith and love. According to the Acts of the Apostles, the first followers of Jesus were 'one in mind and heart'.

**Through the gift of the Spirit, people of many languages learned to profess the one faith, to the praise and glory of God. That is the real miracle of Pentecost. And it is a miracle which, thankfully, still happens. Its that one LANGUAGE of Love in which all of us can still communicate in.**