

Dear Friends,

ACTS 2: 1-18

On the night before he died, Jesus prayed for his friends. He said, "Holy Father, protect them ... so that they may be one, as we are one". He asked for their unity. Then through the cross he gathered "into one the scattered children of God".

In the story of the road to Emmaus we met two of his followers who were moving away from the others. It looked as though the community might be breaking up. The risen Jesus appeared to the separating friends. They were turned around and turned back to their companions who they found "gathered together". Then on the day of Pentecost, when they were "all together in one place", the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them.

Last time I wrote that there isn't a specific recipe that will produce the Spirit. It is not within our power to control the Spirit or demand that the Spirit act in line with our expectations. But it may be that there are ways in which we may open ourselves to the Spirit, or in which we may dispose ourselves to receive the Spirit. It seems likely that when the Church is united, she is more ready for the Spirit than when she is divided.

Luke describes how at Pentecost the Spirit came in "a sound like the rush of a violent wind" and in flames "as of fire". The Spirit "filled the entire house" where the friends of Jesus were together and "rested on each of them".

Peter explained what was happening to the startled crowd that gathered. He saw the meaning of the events in the words of the prophet Joel. There God says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy".

Peter's words made clear that the walls which sometimes divide people have no place with God. There is no room for division on the grounds of sex, age or class. Admittedly at this stage the Spirit is only given to people from the Jewish nation and those who have converted to Judaism. But that wall, the wall of racial division, will also fall later in The Acts of The Apostles. There is no partiality with God. The Spirit is given to men and women, old and young, those of all races. The Spirit rests upon slaves. The people usually at the bottom of the world are equal citizens with God. They too are honoured children who receive God's blessing and gifts.

Our prayer for our broken divided world is "Come Holy Spirit. Fill the entire house". Our prayer for ourselves is "Come Holy Spirit. Rest on each one of us".

God bless you,

Tony