

Pentecost – 5th June 2022
On the occasion of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

I wonder whether any of you saw the cover of Private Eye this week. It shows the Queen greeting Boris Johnson at their weekly private audience. He is saying effusively: 'Enjoy the four day party!' and she responds dryly, 'It's a work event.' It's brilliant. I can't help wondering if she actually said it! As with all the best jokes it has an element of truth. In order for the country to celebrate the Jubilee we needed to see the 96 year old attending and enjoying parties, fly pasts and cathedral services at an age when most of us would prefer a cup of tea at home. And so, on Thursday, putting aside personal preference, that is what she did. For her it **is** work, and work which she has carried out faithfully for seventy years.

This Pentecost, as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the first disciples, I don't think it is presumptuous to say that she has been enabled to do it by the power of the Holy Spirit. At the coronation, the monarch is anointed with the oil of Chrism, the same oil used for the anointing of priests, and, in the Old Testament, for prophets. It both symbolises and enables the presence of the Holy Spirit and we know the young Queen took the spiritual aspect of the coronation seriously. All in church will be offered a copy of a booklet based on the prayers the Queen used in the days and weeks leading up to her coronation. They include this prayer:

'Come Holy Spirit and daily increase in all of us and in me, your humble servant, your manifold gift of grace.'

The complete prayer is a little longer and you will find it in the booklet, but that is the essence of it. It is a prayer that each of us can take for ourselves from the story of Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit will come to us in our time and fall afresh on us. In the upper room in Jerusalem the Holy Spirit came as fire, with the power to melt and change us; as wind with the energy to blow throughout the world sweeping away the trivial and bringing in the new, clean Spirit of God; and as glossolalia, the gift of communication beyond one's own language.

The Queen is one of those who has been given the gift of communication. She may only say, 'Have you come far?' or 'What do you do?' but her attitude, gestures and eye contact communicates her concern and interest in private encounters and that is what those who meet her remember. Every year the carefully chosen words she speaks about faith in her Christmas broadcast remind us that faith is at the centre of our national life. By the power of the Holy Spirit she graces the nation. The joy of our Pentecostal celebrations is that on ourselves in every generation the Holy Spirit falls afresh. We open ourselves to the action of the Spirit in baptism, at confirmation, as we present ourselves week by week for Communion. But the Holy Spirit isn't confined to buildings made by human hands or even to the community of the church the Spirit is free in the world.

For these past ten days, with the wider church, we have been waiting for and praying for the coming of the kingdom just as before Pentecost the disciples were together, waiting and praying. At his Ascension ten days before, Jesus had instructed the disciples, 'Stay in Jerusalem until you are filled with power from on high.' It is surprisingly difficult to stay in one place and wait. Ask small child to wait quietly and

you will see how agonising it is. The disciples were not patient men, asking Jesus impatiently at his Ascension 'Is it **now** that you're going to bring in the kingdom?' But they waited, Luke tells us, meeting together, praying and breaking bread in the upper room of the Last Supper, as we gather together week by week to worship. The gathering with other believers, the act of prayer and the discipline of waiting together make up the preparation for the presence of the Holy Spirit. And God is faithful. In response to our prayer, the Spirit falls afresh, not now with fire and wind but as what Jesus calls the 'Spirit of truth,' as insight, as the faith of new believers. We can discern it in what is fresh and new and genuine and in the power with which melts us, removes our prejudices and lies and injustices and remoulds us into a new people; people of the truth.

Earlier this year the Queen was presented with a copy of a "Loyal Address" written by children of primary school age. It said:

"You have shown a caring manner, determination and dedication to help other people. We think you're doing a great job! We are very lucky to have had you as our Queen for so long." In an unguarded moment the Queen responded, "Most addresses are usually pompous... this is so much nicer." 'Nicer' because it was genuine.

As we celebrate Pentecost today we do so 'gathered together' 'prayerfully' and 'waiting on the Holy Spirit' giving thanks for the life of our Queen and alive to the work of the Spirit of truth in our own lives.