

### **Tools not Toys!**

*Acts 2<sup>1-21</sup>; Psalm 104<sup>26-end</sup>; Romans 8<sup>22-27</sup>; John 15<sup>26-27</sup> 16<sup>4b-15</sup>*

*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability. [Acts 2<sup>4</sup>]*

*Prayer: Jesus we are here, we are here for you (sung)*

The need, on the Day of Pentecost, was that the Apostles could communicate clearly with a culturally diverse group and to do so with ease: the gift of God to them was the ability to be heard in **other languages**.

We, too, live in a culturally diverse area and as we celebrate the generosity of God in the liberality of the Holy Spirit, we perhaps should pause and consider what gift or gifts we need to be able, as Peter did, to stand up and proclaim the Gospel so clearly that those around us respond to it.

Here are my musings:

The distinguishing characteristic of the Disciples between Easter and Pentecost was fear, but when the Holy Spirit came they became bold. The Church needs to find the courage to be bold again.

- ✦ How easily the Church sees the difficult things, even thinking them to be impossible things. How often we want to scuttle into the safety of the inside - the doors may not be locked physically (heath and safety wouldn't allow that) but they can be metaphorically. How comforting it can be to be unseen and anonymous.
- ✦ One of the things I am proudest of having achieved is taking the bricks out of the bell tower - to me it was a symbol of how apologetic the Church in general has become for its very existence. No longer!! We are loud and proud - and can only become louder! Who ever thought that the Church wasn't here for the precise purpose of disturbing those around us?
- ✦ Now I am beginning to think about how we disturb those around us with more than sound - watch this space!

The thing that people couldn't do on the Day of Pentecost was ignore the Apostles - they may have accused them of being drunk but they made an impact. The Church needs to make an impact.

- ✦ Did you notice that the Apostles didn't unlock the door and leave it ajar and still piously wanting for people to find their way in? No! They burst out!
- ✦ We have been guilty of believing the lie that the Church is a matter of indifference and is irrelevant. In this we have been led by those who want to speak about politics, or society, or other things that dominate the press - and we are neither qualified nor competent to hijack an agenda that is not our own.
- ✦ What was the first thing that Peter said after his explanation of what was happening? **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!** Saved from our sins; saved from the worst effects of ourselves; saved for God; saved for God's people; saved for proclaiming good news.

God's imagination ensured that this first Christian Festival was celebrated when people from all over the world would hear and respond with 3000 being baptised on that day.

- ✦ Is the Church of Christ declining? No - every day people turn to Christ and are baptised into the family of his people. Is this Church declining? No. It is growing slowly - something that some think as miraculous in this area, but we are in the business of miracles! (Statistically, we are just above the national average for Sunday attendance - but there is plenty room for more!). Each one bring one - that is still the challenge.
- ✦ God's imagination has put at your hand and mine the means for doing so much more than holding on - I believe it - do you? Do you believe it enough to risk unlocking the doors and causing a disturbance?

God's Holy Spirit anointed the Apostles and the gifts they were given were the gifts that they needed for service there and then. Please, never think that God's gifts should be fossilised into a restrictive list. As God gave the gifts that the Church needed at that point, so he can be depended upon to give the gifts that the Church needs today. But please note that God gives tools not toys: they are to be used and the evidence of this is when the Church grows.