

Dear Friends,

The other day, my driving seemed more erratic than usual and the car was shaking! Yes, you've guessed it, I had sustained a puncture in the rear offside wheel. Very annoying as the car is only six months old and the tyres all in near perfect condition! Having discovered the vagaries of the spare wheel, the complexities of a new-fangled jack and negotiating the impossibilities of the locking wheel nut adaptor, I eventually removed the wheel and substituted it with the spare. Covering myself in confusion and a good deal of muck, I eventually got back on the road an hour or so later. The good agencies of a 'Quick-fit Fitter' soon told me that the tyre was irreparable and that I needed a new tyre. He relieved me of £150 and now, I was back on the road again! Why do things happen when you least expect them and why are things so complicated! They never told me how to change a tyre in my Ordination training!

This month sees the arrival of the anniversary of the birth of the Church. It's on the 9<sup>th</sup> June and we call it the Feast of Pentecost. (Although many still refer to it by its old-English name, Whitsun) This was the day when the gift of the Holy Spirit was lavishly poured out on the rather pathetic group of disciples who had locked themselves away out of a sense of fear. Suddenly, we are told, that there was the sound of a rushing, mighty wind and there seemed to appear tongues of flame resting on their heads... and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was as though the very breath of God had come upon them.

The language is weak because how can you describe the indescribable? Symbols of great power are used. Fire, as we saw in the burning roof of Notre Dame Cathedral or the appalling tragedy at Grenfell Tower, is a powerful force and need never be underestimated. Wind can wreak havoc (some of us remember the Great Gale of 1987!) and wind under pressure, can be explosive. The Spirit came with great power and was a transforming force. The Disciples were changed from timid and feckless individuals into fearless warriors for the gospel message. The locals accused them of being drunk because they were significantly changed into different people! Peter left the safety and comfort of the Upper Room and moved into the alien street to address a large crowd of men and women with powerful words and accused them of the murder of Jesus but how God had mightily raised him from death.

When my tyre burst, I had to leave the comfort of my car and the gentle tones of Classic FM and get stuck into a task for which I was ill prepared and poorly schooled. I had to think quickly and logically if I was ever to get going again. It was raining hard and I was getting cold and sodden but the task beckoned and I had to change from being a bumbling clergyman to a 'super hero' of roadside practicality! I was driven to the task by necessity but the Disciples took on their task by the Grace of God which, through the power of the Spirit, had equipped them for greater work, A disciple is one who follows and sits at the feet of the teacher but these men were disciples no longer, they were Apostles – they were men who were sent with a message! A disciple follows, an apostle leads. The power of the Spirit in Greek is 'dunamis' – a word from which we get the word dynamite! So powerful was the change in them that they were 'explosive' in their new life.

The same Spirit that changed the Disciples and that same power, is still at work in the Church. Lives are transformed daily by this precious gift and Baptism and Confirmation are small signs of the Spirit at work. The message of Pentecost is that we all need to step out of our comfort zone and get our hands 'dirty' in the business of daily living. Helping our neighbours and friends and helping someone in real need is a sign that the Holy Spirit is working in our world. Jesus calls our bodies 'the temples of the Holy Spirit' and, if this is so, we need to allow that same Spirit to work in us and through us.

May God richly bless you all this Pentecost and always.

Yours sincerely,

*Fr Keith*