

Discovering our potential through the gifts of the Spirit

Have we really tapped into the enormous wealth of gifts that lie within us all as active Christians at work in our parish? Today is Pentecost Day when we come to reflect upon and celebrate in all its diversity, the awesome potential that rests at our disposal. And perhaps that is the point; more often than not we don't choose to quarry the vast seams of benevolence that are present in each of us. Well, surely today of all days should be the occasion when we do open our hearts and minds to the probing of the Holy Spirit.

How best though to understand this process? What is it we think of when we turn our minds to the Holy Spirit? The familiar story of Pentecost draws an image for us of the disciples clustered together in the Upper Room, and when the Spirit came all were given the gift of speech. I think this is very revealing. The first gift of the Spirit is the gift of speech. In other words, none of us should be reticent about our faith and what it means to us. The Spirit is forcing us to express in words, our reasons for acting as we do. So we should not be shy about explaining our Christian faith. We should rejoice in it as the defining and motivating factor which propels us out of our natural reticence and into an animated state of happiness and joy.

The promptings of the Spirit galvanise us into taking up an active role within our community. We should enable and encourage one another to recognise the mutual gifts and talents that we all have, expressing the view that these must be placed at the disposal of the community (the Church). This process is an on going one, and it is empowered by the fire of the Spirit. Any one with a burning desire or ambition to achieve a goal, knows just how motivating the persuasive power and support of friends and loved ones can be. So it is with the Spirit. Time after time we sense its presence amongst us, urging us to keep on going in spite of all the difficulties we face.

So the Spirit gives us the power of speech and the courage to achieve. But what happens when we encounter obstacles, what then? Well, the same Spirit offers us opportunities to overcome them. The great examples of this are the stories found in the Acts of the Apostles, when the apostles and disciples, confronted by difficult situations, find that through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, prison doors miraculously open, and obstacles melt away. You just never know when an obstacle may become an opportunity!

The power of speech, the courage to achieve, and the ability to overcome obstacles. These are the gifts which the Spirit gives us and they are here, within our own community. All we have to do is look around and affirm them in each other, because they reside in you and in me. We should resolve to bring them into the open and to use them to proclaim the Gospel for the benefit of our community and those around us.

It is a fact that the Church has already overcome its biggest obstacle; surviving its birth, and it did so by prayer, by remaining faithful to the teaching of Jesus, through community and in the breaking of bread. The Church is thus constantly renewed as she lives and breathes this new life with her lungs filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit. May the same Spirit continue to breathe on us anew and let us pray that we will inhale deeply of its inspiring love.