

The Spirit of God is at work in us.

As you know, this year we have been reading our Sunday gospels from the Gospel of Luke. But Luke's writings comprise not only his gospel, but also a second work which is known to us as the Acts of the Apostles, and it is from the Acts of the Apostles that we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is a vital and enormously significant moment, as the promise of Jesus to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon them as they gathered in the Upper Room is fulfilled. To understand it properly however, we must regard it as a pouring out of God's Spirit not just upon the apostles, but upon each one of us too.

As Christians I sometimes wonder if it is the case that we don't always feel 'engaged' with the things that are going on around us. We all have our own agendas that occupy our thoughts and actions and these are enough to fill our days. The trouble with our agendas is that they are 'our agendas' and they often take on an importance beyond what they really warrant or deserve. They grow and expand to acquire a dimension that can easily overwhelm us, absorbing all of our time. As such we can lose our sense of purpose and become disconnected. What we need is a way of reconnecting, a way of re-setting the compass so that we are suitably attuned to and aware of our true direction. This is where the Spirit comes to our aid.

In the gospel today Jesus speaks of how the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will remind us of all Jesus has said to us. I think we need that reminder more than we might care to admit. We need an Advocate who is able to be with us and to stand along side us as we are called upon to live out our Christian vocation in ever changing circumstances and situations. We need to unlock the Spirit of God who is at work in us and to be made aware of how this can be achieved.

You recall what happened to Jesus after his baptism? Here is Luke's description: *'Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert'* Mark in his Gospel puts it much more dramatically, saying that the Spirit literally *flung* Jesus into the desert. It is as if the Spirit was so powerful a presence in his person and in his own mind, so at work within him, that his own sense of purpose was forged with a dynamic determination. For Jesus this meant that not even a testing in the wilderness could divert him from his mission. Perhaps we need a similar dynamic to re-engage us with our faith. Perhaps we need to sense the presence of the Spirit at work in our lives as a motivating and animating factor which will direct our thoughts and actions.

The challenge of applying the Christian perspective to our lives is exactly what the Spirit places before us. It is so easy for us to be reticent and aloof, to allow the Christian voice to be drowned out and silenced, but isn't it a fact that such the Christian voice, offered with love and generosity is one which reconciles and heals. Isn't such a voice one which consoles and encourages? Isn't such a voice one which inspires and brings wisdom and understanding? Isn't such a Christian voice the Spirit of God at work within us?