

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 31st May; Pentecost

Steve Every last week wrote eloquently about the Holy Spirit and today, Pentecost, is when we celebrate that spirit descending from heaven ten days after the Ascension of Christ and 50 days after Easter.

Do you remember Easter? It seems an awfully long time ago now and all a bit hazy: no communion, no Easter flowers, no rousing Easter hymns sung lustily before a hearty family lunch. Saying which this week Marj Morgan has donated a large bunch of lilies from her garden, in memory of departed friends, particularly Holly Sensier. I have placed them in front of the altar. You can't see them, but you surely can imagine them.

Steve spoke of how central the Holy Spirit is to our faith and one can only agree, but perhaps with reservations. It all depends on one's perception of that Holy Spirit. Years ago, I was brought up short in a committee meeting when the chairman announced an initiative with the words "I have been guided by the Holy Spirit". It was obvious that nobody thought the initiative practical or worthwhile and just sat looking at their feet but let it through on the nod. A month later the Chairman had resigned and the initiative quietly forgotten: the Holy Spirit at work perhaps?

This idea of the Holy Spirit guiding us has ever since given me difficulty and I was reassured at a Lent Lecture at Winchester given by Bishop John Austin Baker. He had spoken for an hour and the first question asked at the conclusion was "Why have you not mentioned the Holy Spirit once?" His reply was that he had always had difficulty with the concept feeling it was often used almost as moral blackmail and a lazy way of making decisions. "I shout engage brain" he said and I can see his point. We should all be guided by the Holy Spirit throughout our lives, but remain aware that like all things it is capable of being abused.

The church throughout the ages has always depicted the Holy Spirit as a dove descending from above. One day, soon I hope, you will be able to see that representation in church in one of the chancel windows. Incidentally when the window was restored in 1991 it came back with the dove ascending and had to be re-leaded the right way up.

Pentecost, or Whitsun was always a Bank Holiday until recent times. The Whitsun Wakes were when fairs were held and people in industry took a few days leave. My grandmother who grew up in Shephed, a small hosiery village, remembered as a child going by train as a family to the seaside for a few days after the Sunday service taking their clothes in a wicker basket. That would be before the first war as she was born on this very day in 1900. We are not yet allowed to go on holiday, but we can enjoy the beautiful weather, the glories of God's nature and soak up the sun and the Holy Spirit too. A very happy Whitsun to you all and I trust you are wearing something red.



Will Green