

# Worship at Home: Pentecost

## 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

### SERMON

*The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell*

Pentecost isn't quite what we'd expect.

The power and presence of Jesus is available to everyone everywhere, but, let's be honest, if you were planning a worldwide mission - and had this sort of power at your disposal - surely getting everyone to speak the same language would have been the best way forward? It's almost certainly what we'd have done if left in charge.

But the Holy Spirit does the opposite. Not us speaking *one* language, but the Church speaking *every* language.

God doesn't reverse the astonishing human variety of language and culture. God blesses it.

We shouldn't really be surprised. You only need to glance out of the window to see that God delights in variety.

We human beings – each and every one of us - are made in God's image – with all our differences. What Jesus has done in his dying and rising is make that into a new community, the Church, which is like a body, made up of lots of different, but equally important, members. It's the birthday of that Church that we celebrate today.

By enabling us to speak about the Christian story in *every* language and *every* culture, the Holy Spirit not only affirms that all this variety is from God, but helps us understand and appreciate and serve the world in all its variety and difference. The Church should reflect this diversity and help every person to hear the message of the gospel in their own language. No one should be excluded.

*Thy Kingdom Come* invites us to invite others to find their place and their joy within God's Church. Invites us to go on translating the Christian message into the languages and cultures of the world and therefore reach out to those who don't know Christ.

We have something that everyone needs: the forgiveness that Jesus brings and the gift of the Spirit that binds us as one.

But those who are not members of the Church yet have something we need. Because the Church is a body where every part is valued and necessary, when some people are cut off or excluded; or where some don't even have an opportunity to hear the invitation of the gospel or are driven away by our failings, the whole body suffers.

But when other people are invited in – as happened on the first Pentecost - the Church is expanded: not just in size, but in beauty and variety; and we even learn more about the beauty of God. For the God we worship is the *one* God who is known in the *three* persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: unity and diversity together.

We are told that the coming of the Holy Spirit was like a rushing wind. You can't see the wind, but you can certainly see its effects. So with the Holy Spirit. We can't see it, but when we learn to love each other and love god and appreciate our differences and live together in love, then God's Holy Spirit is at work.

Oh come Holy Spirit!