

St Philip and St James Anglican Church  
Palma de Mallorca Spain  
23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

**Pentecost Day**

**Text: John 16:4b-15**

**Introduction**

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Today is Pentecost Sunday, an important day in the life of the church, - the day that the church was born. This is the day that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the twelve apostles in Jerusalem took place. This is the reason why today our liturgical colour is red symbolizing the Holy Spirit. This is the same colour as that used for confirmations and ordinations in other Anglican provinces in the communion.

**Background to the Feast of Pentecost**

The feast of Pentecost has its roots in the Old Testament. It was one of the Jewish feast days. However, they did not call the feast 'Pentecost' because that is a Greek name that came later with

Greek civilization under Alexander the Great. They called it the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks. The feast is mentioned five times in the Old Testament. It was the celebration of the beginning of the early weeks of harvest especially of wheat. The feast was celebrated fifty days after the Passover feast and this is the similar tradition with us Christians. We celebrate the Pentecost the Sunday closest to fifty days after the Easter feast. Today we observe the Pentecost not to celebrate harvest but the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

### **Exegesis of the Text**

Our gospel reading today is not explicitly referring to the Pentecost event but Jesus is promising his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is fulfilled today especially in the book of Acts. Who is the Holy Spirit? The catechism teaches us that, “the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the church even now” Therefore the Holy Spirit is God. However, in the gospel of John, the Greek word used for the Holy Spirit is *parakletos*. This word is found in Johannine corpus alone, that is the Gospel and letters of John. So, it is typically a Johannine coinage. Different English versions translate the word *parakletos* as; advocate, counselor,

comforter and intercessor. What is common in all these English versions is that they point to the helping and supporting role of the Holy Spirit. According to John, the Holy Spirit is there to plead our case or testify on our behalf. The Holy Spirit is there to give us comfort, counsel or strength in times of need. We sometimes pay huge monies for these services but Jesus is promising his disciples that they get these services free of charge without making an appointment. This was good news for the apostles and early Christians who were to be sent to a hostile world. They were going to face persecutions and excommunication from public places of worship hence they needed someone who will comfort, counsel and testify on their behalf. Jesus is leaving but he gives them reason to rejoice. He is leaving so that the Holy Spirit might come. The language used by Jesus reminds us of the courtroom setting. He will convict the world about sin, about righteousness and about judgment. The Holy Spirit is the prosecutor and the world that is opposed to God is accused.

## **Application**

As we celebrate Pentecost today, what is the function of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Today's

reading provides us with five functions of the Holy Spirit.

**1. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth about God.**

The world is confused of whom God is like. We are like the five visually impaired people who were asked to describe an elephant. The only way they could describe an elephant was through touching it. The one who touched the horns had a description with the one who touched the trunk. This applied to those who touched the legs and the tail. As human beings we have limitations of our understanding of God. However, the Holy Spirit is there to reveal to us the truth about God

**2. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.**

We live in a world where truth is relative. We have competing claims about truth among people of different orientations. We live in a world of perceptions and the truth is hidden in us. The Holy Spirit will reveal all the truth.

**3. The Holy Spirit will not speak of his own authority but he will speak of what he hears.**

**4. He will tell us of things to come.**

## **5. He will give glory to Jesus**

The Holy Spirit is there to testify to us about Jesus and not about himself. I will end with the words of the liturgy of Pentecost: Come, Holy Spirit, and fill our hearts with the flames of your justices for others. Come Holy Spirit to teach us new songs of compassion and service. Amen.

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Chaplain