



Pentecost Sunday 19 May 2024 : Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 103)

This Pentecost Sunday I am happy to be celebrating Mass with the Newman Cluster of Churches at the Church of Christ the King, Kingstanding, Birmingham. A special Mass has been arranged to highlight the presence of different African nations in the cluster. Taking part will be the Nigerian (both Yoruba and Igbo), the Eritrean, the Swahili-speaking Kenyans, and Ghanaian communities. The Mass will bring home to us what is recorded in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles for this day when peoples of many nations gathered in Jerusalem heard the Gospel in their own languages; the good news of Jesus Risen from the dead; Jesus who came and united all peoples as “one”. The Holy Land where the Day was first celebrated is sadly riven by war and conflict, the very opposite of what Jesus came to bring.

Just this week I was listening to a Podcast produced by America Magazine where Fr Neuhaus, a Scripture Scholar in Israel and Palestine, speaks of the need for the different peoples there to come to realise they cannot be without each other. He used the words “not without the other”: words that sum up where the Catholic Church stands in many areas of conflict in which she finds herself across the world. He said we are called to be incarnate – made flesh – in our very being as Catholics: Catholic Institutions that are open to everyone; hospitals where people are next to each other; schools where students are together. He said shared Catholicism is not enough; our institutions call us to go out: *“When we look up to God, we see a God look down on all of us: not without the other.”*

At Pentecost we have the opportunity to celebrate who we are as a Catholic people:

- In the Collect Prayer for the Vigil we have these words *“grant that from the many scattered nations the confusion of many tongues may be gathered by heavenly grace into one great confession of your name.”*

- In the Preface of the Mass for Pentecost Sunday these words are proclaimed: *“This same Spirit (the Holy Spirit), as the Church came to birth, opened to all peoples the knowledge of God and brought together the many languages of the earth in profession of the one faith”.*

This past week Pope Francis promulgated a document/a decree known as a ‘Bull of Indiction’ for the Jubilee Year 2025. We have heard occasionally of Papal Bulls in the past,

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and it is important to recall that they are formal decrees named after the lead seals (bulla in Latin) attached to them rather than the bulls running at Pamplona! However this Papal Bull is no less challenging: entitled *Spes non Confundit* (Hope does not disappoint) it reminds us in the Jubilee Year *“we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardship of any kind.”* My thoughts turned to the words of Father Neuhaus *“shared Catholicism is not enough; our institutions call us to go out.”* The joy of Pentecost is special for us this year in Christ the King as we celebrate the Holy Spirit that has come down on us all whatever our nation or language, making us one in Faith in Jesus the Risen One. At the same time it is good for us to hear the words of Pope Francis in his Homily at Vespers on the occasion of the presentation of the Papal Bull. He again focused on hope: *“Dear brothers and sisters, in this Year of Prayer, as we prepare for the celebration of the Jubilee, let us become singers of hope in a world marked by too much despair. By our actions, our words, the decisions we make each day, our patient efforts we sow the seeds of beauty and kindness wherever we find ourselves, we want to sing of hope, so that the melody can touch the heartstrings of humanity and reawaken in every heart the joy and courage to embrace life to the full.”*

We are a people of hope, a people with a mission. One of the special gifts from the Church in the Jubilee Year is “A Jubilee Grace” a Blessing which will be available to us all locally as well as centrally in Rome, and in places of Pilgrimage especially of Our Lady. We will all wish to have the healing touch of the Church particularly with regard to the wonder of Forgiveness which was passed on by Jesus to his disciples in the Gospel read on Pentecost Sunday. It is a most treasured gift of the Holy Spirit which strengthens us for our mission of hope.

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