

# **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 209**

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’**

## **Welcome**

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

## **Scripture Passages**

*Acts 2: 1-21*

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

<sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

<sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> ‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

### *John 20: 19-23*

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

## Reflection

When we make major decisions that change our lives, we can clearly divide our time into 'before' and 'after'. The spiritual landscapes and temperatures of 'before' and 'after' are very different.

I remember visiting Cape Point in South Africa and looking down at the sea. It was the point where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet and I was told that if you were swimming in the sea, you would immediately notice where the dividing line came because the temperature of the two oceans was quite different.

And if I think about committing my life to Christ again, I can quite clearly see a 'before' and an 'after' with different spiritual landscapes and temperatures. 'After', I had a sense of joy, peace and love in my life that was simply not there 'before'.

Indeed, if I think about other major points of transition in my life the same has been true. There was a very clear 'before' and 'after' in my being ordained. And this was equally true when I became Rector of the Camelot Parishes.

So that is one way of looking at these major points of transition in our lives. But there is another. As we reflect on the period of time which leads up to these decisive moments, we are likely to become aware of many much smaller turning points each one of which is significant in its own way.

These points of transition may be so slight that, until we consciously recollect them, they escape our notice. For instance, in preparing to make a major decision we may have gone down what seemed to us simply to be a dead end. We then forget about it until we look at this dead end again in the light of what happened afterwards to change our lives. And then we realise that the experience of trying out various directions and finding that

they were not the ones that God had for us was a vital preparation for the future that did in fact lie in store for us.

When we look at the account in the book of Acts of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we are clearly looking at an account of a 'before' and an 'after'.

This is true not simply for the disciples but for many from the crowds who listened to them. They were completely changed by this encounter with the Holy Spirit. They were not the same people as they had been before.

From the very beginning, this account of the coming of the Holy Spirit is marked by sudden drama, noise and even violence,

'And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.'

And when Peter, the chief apostle, gets up to speak to the crowds, it is clear that his life has been transformed by the Holy Spirit. He speaks about Jesus and the Holy Spirit with a boldness and directness that cuts through to the hearts of all who hear him. What a contrast this is to the frightened person who, in the run up to Jesus' crucifixion, had denied three times that he had ever even known Jesus.

But there is another way of looking at the coming of the Spirit. Sometimes when people compare our readings this morning, they wonder whether the disciples received the Holy Spirit on two separate occasions.

For in John's gospel, Jesus breathes on the disciples and says 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. And again, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes on the disciples after they have been waiting and praying for this to happen. However, if they have already received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed upon them why are they still waiting and praying for the Holy Spirit to come?

This is a good question. But maybe it is not the most important question to ask about how these two passages fit together. Indeed, it could even be a distraction and prevent us from seeing how each of these two accounts of the Spirit's coming have different truths to teach us and how each account complements the other.

In John's gospel, when Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples it comes at a point when they have indeed reached something of a dead end. This is not one of those 'before' and 'after' occasions. Rather it is one of those small but significant turning points which turn out in retrospect to be a vital preparation for the major transition which is to come.

The dead end of the disciples is signified in physical terms by the locked doors behind which the disciples are meeting. The locking of the doors is a sign of their fear of their enemies. The whole atmosphere is one of enclosure and anxiety. There is no chance that any message of any kind can be given by these people to the outside world.

And so, a work of transformation needs to begin and it has to happen gradually. In fact, as we read different accounts of what happened to the disciples in the period between Easter and Pentecost, we find a number of smaller, but vital, turning points that take place. Another of them, for instance, occurs in John's account of the risen Christ meeting the disciples on the seashore as they go fishing.

But taken together all these small turning points are necessary in order to prepare the disciples fully for the dramatic and powerful public ministry to which they will be called following Pentecost.

As they meet behind locked doors, Jesus first of all addresses their fears by speaking to them the reassurance of His peace, 'Peace be with you.'

His breathing of the Holy Spirit upon them is a much more private and peaceful form of receiving the Holy Spirit than will later take place at Pentecost. Only Jesus and the disciples are involved. It happens in a hidden place safely away from public view.

And yet for all its relative gentleness this encounter with the Spirit that takes place behind locked doors is still a powerful one.

The peace which Jesus speaks to them is a preparation for the disciples later to be sent out publicly in mission. Jesus tells them, 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

They also receive from Jesus the empowerment of the Spirit, to continue Jesus' ministry of releasing people from their sins. This too is a vital part of their preparation for future public ministry.

This encounter with Jesus behind locked doors is, then, in many ways a movement out of the dead end in which they have found themselves. It points them towards a renewed and fruitful public ministry that will await them following Pentecost.

There will be other steps to take, of course, before they are fully ready for this public ministry. They will need to have further encounters with the risen Jesus and to remain steadfast and faithful in their private and shared life of prayer. But this occasion on which Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them is an essential link in the chain.

For while the receiving of the Spirit behind locked doors has been hidden and private, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost most emphatically and immediately results in a powerful public ministry.

This is demonstrated in its most dramatic form by the gift of tongues. This gift has a very practical impact and purpose. The crowd gathering in

Jerusalem for Pentecost comes from all nations of the known world with all their diversity of languages.

The gift of tongues enables the disciples first of all to speak to all these representatives of the different nations in their own individual language. And this in turn causes awe, questioning and amazement among those who listen, softening people's hearts to hear the message of the gospel which Peter will then preach to them.

So, as we think about these two different accounts of the coming of the Spirit, we may be drawn to reflect on how necessary it is for any public ministry that is given to us to be preceded and undergirded by our own private and hidden faithfulness.

And when we look at the periods in our lives leading up to the 'before' and 'after' moments do we notice those small turning points which only we may be aware of and which we may even have forgotten? For our lives do not always progress in a straight line and perhaps what we thought were just dead ends or blocked opportunities were actually a vital preparation for what lay ahead of us.

*Tristram*

## **Points for Prayers**

- Recognising the turning points in our lives through responding to the Holy Spirit
- For the work of cleaning up the aftermath of the recent floods in these and neighbouring parishes and for those who need to find temporary accommodation as a result of them
- Resolution to industrial disputes especially in the healthcare sector

- Conflict between Russia and the Ukraine and those who are refugees from this conflict
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers, children and parents of North Cadbury church school

## Hymn

One hymn for this Sunday which speaks of the presence of the Spirit is 'Be still for the presence of the Lord.'

## Services for this week and next

Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Communion, Holton
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlinton
Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> June	9.00 am Communion, Yarlinton
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> June	9.30 am Camelot Matins, North Cheriton
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 am Group Communion, North Cadbury

## **Excalibur**

Excalibur is back in paper form. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes. The May edition of Excalibur has now been published online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://camelotparishes.co.uk).

## **The Parish Office**

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him via email ([office@camelotparishes.org.uk](mailto:office@camelotparishes.org.uk)) or on 01749 850934.

*Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family*

*We pray that 'we might live in love,  
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5: 2)