

8 June

It is a great responsorial psalm; 'Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth'. We have this sense of the Spirit going out to the whole world, to every place, time, people, language and culture; the Spirit of the Lord going out where there is joy and sadness, light and darkness, freedom and oppression. We have this sense taking us back to the book of Genesis and the great creation story, the divine breath of God hovering over creation, calling forth life, shaping, renewing, refreshing, the Spirit of God reaching out across the face of the earth.

Last Monday night I watched the ABC Four Corners report on Pope Francis. It examined his life, his story, his style, the radical shift for the Church and some of the challenges facing the Catholic Church today. One of the Pope's closest friends, a Jewish rabbi, spoke powerfully about the man who has become the pope. There is certainly a new spirit in the Church in terms of the pope's leadership and style. It is new but it is really taking us back to the core of the Gospel – the Church is called to serve, the Church is missionary by nature, the Church and her leaders must be humble, concern for the poorest of the poor must be our core business. The pope wants Christians to rediscover the spirit of joy that comes from faith. Wherever he goes, he seems to radiate this joy simply by being a human, a Christian, alive with the Spirit of God. With Pope Francis, something has changed for the Catholic Church.

Something changed for the early Church at Pentecost. The gift of the Spirit transformed them, filled them with joy, gave them a great sense of missionary energy, sent them out to speak new languages and bring the faith to new cultures and lands. They were united in their mission, they had a sense of purpose and they were not afraid. Pentecost was a great event in the life of the early Church that changed this group of disciples. We may not have been present at Pentecost, but something changed in our lives on the day of our Baptism. We became children of God and received the gift of faith. We received a grace from Jesus, we received the gift of the Spirit making us a new creation, filling us with God's love. We received our vocation as Christians, as disciples, and since the day of our Baptism we have come to know in a deeper way, the meaning and significance of the Christian way of life, how to grow in our faith, why it is important to be part of a parish community, to contribute to the

building up of this community, to be part of a community of prayer, to help young people and young families grow in this life of grace that is ultimately the gift of the Spirit. That is why the Church celebrates Pentecost Sunday exactly 50 days after Easter Sunday; celebrating the Spirit that calls us together as the Church, celebrating the gift of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, celebrating the Spirit that renews creation across the face of the earth.

The Spirit is that gift that moves us into action, moves us to prayer, moves us to serve and give of our lives, moves our hearts to mercy, justice and compassion; the Spirit at times moves us to tears of joy and gratitude to God and in times of loneliness, pain or frustration, the Spirit is that gentle promise of God that comes to us in our fears, 'Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you by your name, you are mine'. Pentecost Sunday reminds us that the gift of the Spirit draws us into unity as the one family of God, as a community of faith, as brothers and sisters of the one Lord. On the Four Corners program on Monday night, Archbishop Mark Coleridge spoke about the call to justice, especially in Australia regarding our treatment of asylum seekers. Archbishop Coleridge stated that Pope Francis would be appalled at what was happening on Manus Island.

On this Pentecost Sunday, we raise in particular, a prayer for peace in the troubled parts of our world. Pope Francis has asked that he pray for peace as he is convening a Middle East peace summit on Sunday in Rome. May that powerful Spirit of God move the hearts of political leaders to strive for a just and lasting peace in our world; let today's psalm be the prayer on our lips; 'Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth'.