



The Solemnity of Pentecost 28 May 2023 – Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth”.

The readings on Pentecost Sunday give two accounts of the sending of the Holy Spirit. The first takes place on Easter Sunday and is the focus of the Gospel reading. The second is on Pentecost Day and is the focus of the reading from the Acts of the Apostles. *“It is enough that we know that after his death, Jesus fulfilled his promise to send his disciples a helper, an advocate who would enable them to be his witnesses throughout the world”* we read in Sunday Connection a Liturgical Resource (from Loyola Press). It goes on to point out that in the context of the Feast of Pentecost, the Gospel which is John 20: 19-23 *“reminds us of the integral connection between the gifts of peace and forgiveness and the action of the Holy Spirit”*. Jesus greets his disciples with the gift of peace. Jesus then commissions his disciples to continue the work that he had begun This reconciling presence is also to be a way of life for Christians. In situations of conflict, we are to be agents of peace and harmony among people.

The Festival I was part of earlier this week comes to mind. Hundreds of people gathered at the Recollect Augustinian Centre in Honiton, Devon, to honour St Rita of Cascia. Those with good memories will recall Ranieri the Manager of Leicester City took his team to the Shrine of St Rita of Cascia in Italy to pray for the impossible – and Leicester did it!

These days we hear the word “icon” being used frequently – as I write this Reflection, it is Tina Turner, the “icon of Rock and Roll”. The Saints are our icons and Rita of Cascia was and is still an icon of *“Peace and Reconciliation”*, especially for families and communities, so much so that people turned to her in “impossible” situations. Ranieri must have been brought up in this tradition at home, though I don’t think St Rita was into Premier League Football! Rita is an extraordinary story of forgiveness and reconciliation, and popular all over the world because people feel close to her. The Abbess of the Convent in Cascia said in a Vatican Radio interview:

“St Rita is a Saint of the people and for the people; her devotion is so strong in the whole world because many feel she is near, one of them, and this – we all know – is due to the fact that Rita in her life as a daughter, wife, mother, widow and religious, has been simply and practically, as the story of a life that could be one of us”. The interview with the Abbess went on to explain the relevance of St Rita for people today. The Abbess said: *“We experience in our conversations with people how many conflicts there are in families today, and our world has need of peace, the family has the need of peace, and I believe St Rita is a*

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'shining' example in this regard, because she prayed with all her strength, and she succeeded, because she believed God can bring peace in people's hearts". To the question: "What does St Rita ask of believers today?" the Abbess answered: "St Rita who pursued dialogue and reconciliation through the love of Christ and our neighbour, asks us to love with the heart of God, make ourselves instruments of reconciliation and mercy, as she was in her life".

I note in the News these past few days that Pope Francis is going to the World Day for Youth 2-6 August in Lisbon, Portugal, and has chosen as the theme "*Arise, go with haste*" which reflects the first line of the Gospel for the Feast of the Visitation, 31 May, this coming week. Mary responded in the Spirit to the needs of her cousin Elizabeth who was due to give birth to John the Baptist.

In the reading from 1 Corinthians for Pentecost Sunday St Paul writes of the variety of gifts given by the Spirit in the Body of Christ. The challenge to us on Pentecost Sunday is to respond to those gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially for peace and reconciliation in family life and the wider community. In these days when we can spend a good deal of time making plans for a more Synodal Church (nothing wrong with that) we can fail to see and respond to what is needed now around us. Mary is the example of response given "*in haste*" to meet the needs of Elizabeth.

The great commission of Pentecost: "*As the Father sent me, so am I sending you*" requires us to reflect on our calling to be witnesses. The disciples received this commission in the quiet breath of Jesus on Easter Sunday. At Pentecost there was a powerful wind shaking the house where they were gathered.

However the Holy Spirit manifests his coming to you: this is the Day to respond in haste as Mary did, not to put it off for another day! "*Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth*".

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