

Sunday Message from Fr William for Pentecost Sunday 2023

Dear People of St Mary's

'Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven...' Acts 2, the account of Pentecost, goes on to list some of them: Parthians, Medes, Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome...Cretans and Arabs.



These were likely to be Jews of the diaspora who had either come to resettle in Jerusalem after their ancestors had dispersed to these other lands, or come just for the annual Jewish feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the Passover, and it had a strongly sacrificial character. It was a day when devout Jews brought the best of their harvest to the Temple in Jerusalem and offered this 'in sacrifice' to the Lord.

But on this particular day of Pentecost something took place that transformed the meaning of Pentecost for ever, for those who witnessed it, and for us Christians too. These devout people 'from every nation under heaven' witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit, now poured into the newly born Christian community. And it was from among these devout Jews that the first conversions took place. At first they were sceptical and didn't understand what they were witnessing. But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke to them, opening their hearts and minds to the reality of what they were witnessing – the power of the Spirit and the birth of the new born Church. That very day, we are told, about three thousand were added to their number (Acts 2).

If you've been joining us for weekday masses through the Easter Season, or if you read the Mass readings of the day, you'll know that it has taken us right through the Acts of the Apostles, the astonishing work of the Holy Spirit working through the early Christian community in the days following Pentecost.

William

Pentecost Sunday, 28 May 2023