

## Easter Week 6 - 2022

Acts 15:1-2; Ps 66; Apoc 21:10-14; John 14:23-29

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This coming Thursday we will be celebrating the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Only a week and a few days more and it will be Pentecost. This is the birth of the Church, when God the Father Almighty sends God the Holy Spirit upon his people so that they bear witness to Jesus, who is God the Son. It is a gift for the world.

Are you ready to receive what you have already been given? The readings for today all seem to attune in the direction of the Spirit. The first reading taken from the Book of Acts has a single line that could easily be under emphasised. The Apostles announce an important decision with the words: '*It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves...*'<sup>1</sup> The decision itself is important, but what I would like to draw out from this line is the idea that we must work with God's spirit to determine what he is telling us. He does not impose: we have to be perceptive *and* receptive.

The Gospel is explicit about the Holy Spirit. As Jesus prepares to ascend into heaven he says to his disciples:

*'I have said these things to you  
while still with you:  
but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,  
whom the Father will send in my name,  
Will teach you everything  
And remind you of all I have said to you.'*<sup>2</sup>

Why Jesus has to leave for the Holy Spirit to come in this way is worth investigating on another day - maybe at Pentecost - but there does seem to be a clear connection between the life of God the Father and Jesus and what the Holy Spirit reveals about them. I would not say that it is clearly stating that God is Trinity, but it certainly seems heavily laden with this understanding.

Now the second reading does not mention the Holy Spirit at all and yet I see within it a beautiful and evocative image. The words that worked this image upon me were these from John's vision of Heaven:

*I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it.*<sup>3</sup>

In this city Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are in themselves both the temple – a temple which stands for the contemplation - and the source of light – a light which is the image of life. God and the Lamb are the centre of this image, but there is no Holy Spirit. The Lord God Almighty is distinct from the Lamb. The Lamb is the sign of Christ, the Son of God who entered into the world and was sacrificed for the world's salvation. The Lamb does not hold a lighted torch but is a lighted torch for God's glory, which means that he does not try to show his own glory, but only serves the Father. But what of the light that illumines them? The light itself is not the Father, it is His Glory. The light itself is not the Son, He is the torch. The light which is the Father's Glory, the Glory which shines forth from the Son who is the living torch containing that light and which reveals both the Father and the Son is, in my

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 15:1-2,22-29

<sup>2</sup> John 14:25

<sup>3</sup> Apocalypse 21:10-14,22-23

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vision, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the light which reveals the Son who burns with God the Father's glory. The Holy Spirit is the light which reveals God the Father because the Son burns for His Glory. The light is not separate from God the Father and God the Son, yet neither is it identical with them. It is a beautiful image of the unity of Trinity in being. More importantly it is a pattern of our salvation.

This is the Holy Spirit in whose light we bask in at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit allows us to see. We are attracted to it, we are warmed by it, and we see by it God Himself. The Holy Spirit transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit illuminates God the Father's love for us on the altar, and allows us see and touch Christ, a Christ who points not to Himself, but to His Father.

This is what we learn from the Holy Spirit: the life of God the Father and God the Son that wishes to be crafted into our lives, that we should bear its image in our soul. This is the Spirit of Pentecost that should bring us to our knees in quiet contemplation of a gentle breeze, and should raise us to our feet as we burn with His fire. If we see this, if we catch just a glimpse of dawning understanding through it, well then, it simply must change you.