

## **Pentecost**

**Year C**

**Acts 2:1-21**

**Romans 8:14-17**

**John 14:8-17, 25-27**

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### **Show us the Father**

Seeing as we're in the season of Wandering for God in the parish, how do you fancy a bit of journey back in time this morning?

Come with me back to the beginning of December, the long, dark, cold nights of Advent where we longed for and spoke of and sung of the coming of the Light of the World.

Come with me back to Christmas where we rejoiced that the Light of the World had come in this baby, Jesus, God with us, breaking into our world.

Come with back to the Epiphany when the Light is made known to the world, when we blessed our houses so that they may be light too.

Come with me back to Candlemas as we turned from celebrating the beginning of the good news to anticipating the fulfilment of our salvation.

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Come with me back to Lent, to those forty days where we allowed the Light of the World to shine in the forgotten or hidden corners of our lives so that we might see the Father in our entirety as broken human beings.

Come with me back to the Great Days of the Triduum where we saw the Light of the World put out, the cry of the cross, the sealing of the tomb and loss of all hope.

Come back with me to the triumphal joy of Easter Day when death is defeated, and the light shines even brighter in the darkness and where God the Father shows himself to us through the risen Jesus Christ.

Come back with me 10 days to the ascension, to the entering into heaven of Jesus, sitting down at the right hand of the Father in Majesty, praying for us and with us continually.

Come back with me fifty days after the resurrection, the growing group of disciples shut in the upper room, as the Spirit is poured out and the doors are thrown open. Pentecost isn't the lastminute add on, it is the culmination of all that began on the first day of Advent. The outpouring of the Spirit is the final piece of the jigsaw of God revealing Godself to the world.

“Philip said to Jesus, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’” Now it’s easy for us to roll our eyes and tut at yet another example of the disciples not getting it. But Philip sums up here the cry of all humanity throughout all history, ‘show us the Father and that will be all we need.’ It is what the writer of the creation account in Genesis wants us to see that we’ve lost, that daily, intimate presence with God. It is what Moses pleads with God for, ‘show me your glory.’ It is what the psalmists continually cry for in hope.

But before we get too harsh on Philip notice exactly what he says, ‘show us the Father.’ Not show us God, not show us the Almighty, but show us the Father. The disciples **are** learning. They are learning in how Jesus prays, how he speaks of God as Father, that there is an intimacy that can be had with God. They are learning a new relationship, and so Philip’s cry of “show us”, isn’t entirely off the mark.

Father. There is much debate over whether we should continue to use the phrase ‘Father’. And before you fold your arms in annoyance, or tut about wokery gone mad, hang on one moment. Any description of God is inadequate. Preachers, theologians, disciples, all of us know that we can only say the least worst thing about God. As St Augustine said, if you can

understand it, it's not God. So, we should weigh up our imagery to make sure it still helps us to approach God. Both Jesus and Paul use the term, Abba, Father in their teaching. It speaks of intimacy, it speaks of relationship, it speaks of unconditional love. Now, for many people, the image of a father can bring different emotions, as a mother can for others, and we need to acknowledge that. Philip's cry of 'show us the Father,' is helpful here, it is our modern cry of 'show us what real Fatherhood looks like.' So, in many ways, every time we use Father, we do so in hope of finding in God the Fatherhood that intimately and lovingly brings us into safe and flourishing relationship.

When Jesus replies to Philip, and through Philip to us, he does so not with a long lecture but with a simple message, if you want to see the Father look at me. It is what Jesus has come to do; already in his prologue, John has said that the incarnate Jesus is full of God's glory and grace and truth, that through him we see the Father.

And here's the thing, Jesus shows the Father because the Father wants to be seen, wants to be known. When Adam hides in the garden it is God who comes looking for him. It is God who comes looking for Israel. And it is God in Jesus who comes looking for us, and the Spirit who tells us we've been found by adopting us into God's family. Any theology that tries to teach us

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that Jesus somehow rescues us from the Father is heresy. Jesus comes to help us be found by the Father.

When we cry show us the Father, it is the Spirit who leads us back to Christ to find the Father who loves us. In the community of the Church, in prayer, in the sacrament, in the fruits of the Spirit being grown in our lives we find Jesus and are found again by the Father, and are turned into his likeness.

St Paul will develop this thinking in his epistles. He will tell us that the Spirit abides in us as the seal, the guarantee of God's promises in us. That the Spirit coming to dwell in us makes us children of God, that through the Spirit we too can cry Abba, Father. That the Spirit abiding in us will bring gifts, will produce fruit and will help us to pray. That the Spirit in us will show us the Father, through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is quite clear that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it does not know him. The Day of Pentecost is the day all that changes. It is the day when the disciples are equipped to show the world and sent flying out of their hidden upper room. The Spirit who has shown us the Father, the Spirit who has led us into truth now sends us out to tell the world.

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And we all shift uncomfortably in our pews. Because we don't really want to be like the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, do we? Doing and saying weird things and drawing attention to ourselves.

Friends, Pentecost reminds us that we have been found by the Father and are being led into truth, but it also reminds us that there is work to do. As we allow the Spirit to work in our lives, as we allow her to bring growth and gifts, she builds up the Church. Pentecost jolts us out of our self-absorption to hear the cry of the World, "Show us the Father," and reminds us that through the Spirit in us we can show Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life, the image of the Father.

As in the upper room almost 2,000 years ago you and I will receive the flames of fire! The Paschal Candle that we lit on Easter Day and has been burning every time we have prayed and worshipped in this church since, will be extinguished today. It will be lit for baptisms and funerals during the rest of the year, acknowledgments of the Kingdom of God breaking into our world, of the power of the resurrection creating new eternal life. But the flame doesn't go out, because each of us will light our own candle from this flame, as a reminder that we are now the light. And here's the thing ... we don't have to be perfect to do it or have it all sorted. This Paschal Candle is broken; it fell

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out of the stand just before the Easter Vigil and split in half. Charlie fixed it before a panicking new incumbent could have a complete meltdown, we thought it would do until we could order a new one, but it has gone on burning and doing the job despite being imperfect.

Tomorrow in the Church's liturgical year we enter Ordinary Time. The Church's ordinary business is to show the world the Father in the person of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. To make the love of God visible, as the ordination rite has it. By the Church, I mean us! It is in the rhythm of our corporate worship, daily prayer, the Eucharist, singing, caring that we hear and learn the truth. It is in the meeting together as the Body of Christ that the Spirit indwells, there we are led into truth. In John, showing the world is about love and obedience. It is in our love for each other that we show the world the Father. It is in the love that we have for creation that we show the world the Father.

Even in our brokenness you and I can still show the world the Father because the Spirit shines through all our cracks. Show us the Father, the world cries; in the power of the Spirit, taking our candles as a sign of the Spirit's empowerment of the Spirit working in and through us, will we?