

5th June 2022

Pentecost

Spirit

“Mens cuiusque est quisque.”

“The spirit is the true self.”

Marcus Tullius Cicero, De Republica, book 6

I struggle to believe that, on Pentecost, a Spirit descended on a chosen group of people as an external intervention into their human existence. But I have no trouble believing that on that remarkable day, a group of expectant people found, in Cicero's words, the spirit of "the true self".

What the Pentecost disciples had, and what they took with them out into the streets of their city, was not something new, poured out by some beneficent God on a chosen few. For what they found on that day was what they *already* had but didn't know or believe they had. The wonder of Pentecost is that these folk were changed, not to become something different and new, but to be what they were fully meant to be, remarkable people who could do remarkable things. "The spirit is the true self."

While many of the traditional Pentecost hymns take as their metaphor the Holy Spirit "coming down" – Wesley's "O thou who camest from above", and the 15th century "Come down, O love divine", for example – many of the more modern hymns see the Spirit "with us", working "in us", to make us the disciples we were called to be. One such hymn is by the late Timothy Reece, which reads as follows:

*Holy Spirit, ever living, as the Church's very life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving through her in a ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit, ever forming in the Church the mind of Christ;
You we praise with endless worship for your fruit and gifts unpriced.*

*Holy Spirit, ever working through the Church's ministry;
Quickening, strengthening and absolving, setting captive sinners free;
Holy Spirit, ever binding age to age and soul to soul
In a fellowship unending, you we worship and extol.*

Here, for me, is the truth of the Spirit, the meaning of Pentecost and the wonder of discipleship: you are *already* Spirit filled. Go! Believe in yourself! You have what it takes to serve. And rejoice that, in being "the true self" you were made to be, the Holy Spirit is working through you, right now.

A prayer for today

I become what I was made to be, when the Spirit of holiness sets me free. Amen