

Reflection for Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:10-11

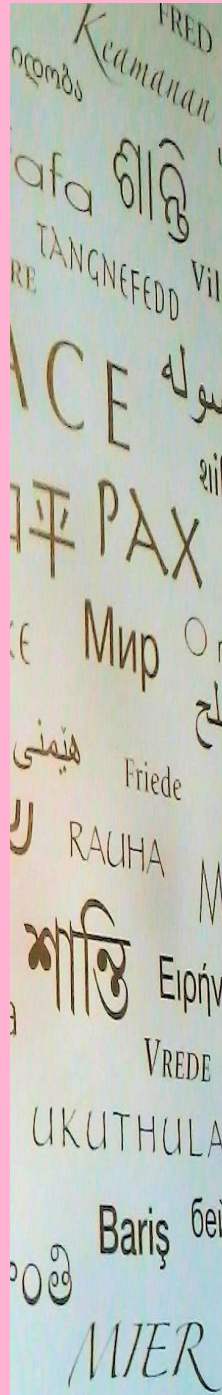
1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13

Gospel John 20:19-23

Written by Fr Rob Esdaile. Rob is a member of our Nonviolence Working Group and Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton.



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The Burning Dove of Peace

In the beginning was a mighty wind, stirring the waters on the first day, bringing forth life and light. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, a gentler image of a descending dove illustrates the heavenly voice: *"This is my Son, the Beloved."* But there is nothing dove-like at his crucified end, when Jesus expired, surrendering his Spirit into the Father's hands with a cosmic cry of pain.

There's no white bird seen at Pentecost, either. The mighty wind returns, of course, probing footings and rattling doors and windows. A noise fills the place and startles, bringing people running. But it's visibility is now a flame descending on believers' heads, a fire like that which Moses saw, flaring without consuming.

This testing fire is the form the Dove of Peace must take today if we would free crucified humanity from its cross and open up paths of justice, solidarity and simple grateful living. The Spirit is an awkward gift, testing the foundations, attracting attention and opposition, admired and yet despised, cutting off the option of quiet indifferent living in the face of human pain.

The fire that settles on each disciple brow and in each heart; this passion for the earth and rejection of crucifying violence; this asking of the awkward question and rejection of the easy lie; **this** is Pentecost and this the way of Christian hope. After forty days of flood the dove returned, bearing in its beak an olive twig, a sprig of possibility, a sign of a fertile earth where humanity might make landfall, disembark and till the broken earth once more. Our brow, our lips, our heart, bearing that sprig of God's Shalom/Salaam, become the Dove descending; and heaven's voice is heard once more: *"Here is God's Beloved. Listen - and live!"*