

# PENTECOST SUNDAY HOMILY

We live in anxious and uncertain times. The ripples of war and violence around the world and the volatility of global politics have their affects on us. Add to that the pressures on families, ever rising costs of living, uncertainties around work and the vagaries of climate and severe weather events and it's tempting to batten down the hatches and close in on ourselves.

And when that happens, we can begin to retreat from the world.

The Gospel today places us in a similar space. The disciples, despite everything they have experienced, are behind closed doors. They have heard the best news imaginable. They have walked with Jesus, heard him speak of God's love, of forgiveness, of hope—and yet they are held back by fear.

It is into that space that Jesus comes. He breathes his Spirit into them. Not just a comforting presence, but a Spirit that renews and energises—a Spirit that moves them from fear to courage, from being closed in to stepping out.

And then, in the first reading, we see the fruit of that transformation. They go out—and something remarkable happens. Each person hears them “in their own language.” That detail is important. The Spirit does not erase difference. The Spirit honours it. The one Gospel is not delivered in a single uniform way, but in a richness of expression so that each person can truly hear and understand.

For us here in Cairns, that speaks powerfully into our lived reality.

Ours is a Church of great cultural diversity. We are shaped by the wisdom and many languages of First Nations peoples, whose deep connection to land and community can enrich our faith immensely. We are blessed by people who have come from across the Pacific, from Asia, from Africa, and beyond—each bringing their own language, traditions, and ways of seeing the world. Even within our local communities there are different ways people experience life—different struggles, different hopes.

Pentecost tells us that this diversity is not an obstacle to the Gospel—it is the very place where the Gospel comes alive.

# PENTECOST SUNDAY HOMILY

And that brings us to this moment, as we complete our diocesan synod. In many ways, the synod has been an exercise in listening—to these many voices, these many “languages.” We have tried to hear not only words, but the deeper experience behind them. In that listening, we trust that the Spirit has been at work among us.

Now Pentecost asks us to take the next step.

If we are being sent out, as the Gospel says, then how do we bring the Good News in ways that can be heard?

It means we must begin with listening. We cannot speak the Gospel effectively if we have not first allowed ourselves to understand the person before us.

It means we must approach cultural diversity with reverence. Not trying to fit everyone into one way of being Church, but allowing the Gospel to take flesh within the various cultures and settings that surround us.

It means we must be attentive to people’s real lives—the pressures, the anxieties, the questions they carry—and speak a word that connects with those realities.

And it means we must be willing to move beyond what is familiar. The Spirit leads us, sometimes gently and sometimes uncomfortably, into new ways of being Church—into “a continual series of beginnings,” into the mystery of what we are yet to become. For us as a diocesan community, that is where we stand now.

The Spirit who opened the doors for the apostles, who enabled their message to be heard in every language, is the same Spirit at work among us. If we are open to that Spirit, we will find ways—simple, authentic, and real—for others to hear the Good News as truly good news for them.

Not in someone else’s language, but in their own.

Come, Holy Spirit!