**SERMON FOR PENTECOST | 05.06.22**

**Acts 2: 1-21; Romans 8: 14-17; St John 14: 8-17**

**Most years the Feast of Pentecost, when the Spirit finally came down on the Apostles, so beginning the growth of the Christian Church, would have been quite enough to think about. But this year we don’t just have one celebration we have three: not just Pentecost but also the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee and the adult baptism of Mohammad Bagheri, our first Moslem convert.**

**But if ever there was as reason to say: you can’t have too much of a good thing, this has to be it! And wonderfully each of the three quite distinct events have got enmeshed in one another so that bits of one theme get caught up in another.**

**So there we were in Arlington Square yesterday afternoon in fabulous sunshine, eating Sinead’s variant of the special Jubilee trifle. There must have been a couple of hundred people there – and of course nobody knew everyone. But here and there were members of St James’ and of other churches; some musicians who have played here; artists who have shown their work on our walls; a couple married here last year and other neighbours who have been involved in one project or another. And total strangers. Talking to one man I was surprised by just how interested he was in the work of the Church locally and whose comments ended with *I really admire what’s going on here.* All very low key but the Church was there, visible and involved with what everyone else was up to. And of course it was at our tables that everyone was sitting – I am glad to say!**

**And what were we celebrating? Not, as in past royal jubilees like 1887 or 1935 when the nation basked in the glory of being at the head of one of the greatest Empires the world has ever seen. No, frail though she is, here was a queen with enough royal dignity to be able to welcome back Harry and Meghan and their two children in a spirit of true reconciliation – whatever blunders may have been made and whatever may or may not have been said – and who was prepared to sit opposite Paddington Bear in a really funny sketch about marmalade sandwiches, marking out the time with their silver tea spoons as an introduction to the great Queen anthem ‘We will rock you’ at the start of the Platinum Jubilee concert outside Buckingham Palace! No one can doubt that this Jubilee has been about a person - not a role and certainly not an imperial figurehead.**

**The arrival of Mohammad in February this year has been another unfolding delight. Not safe to stay in Iran, he lives with friends in Wenlock Street in a state of legal limbo, still. And he has spent his time reading – and in particular exploring ideas about faith. He wasn’t converted to Christianity at a massive service or even by a persuasive friend but by the gradual opening up of his heart and soul by what he discovered on line! And so he wandered into St James’ and found himself a home from home and people willing to accept him as a person through whom God was at work.**

**And then Pentecost: the renewing of the Church by the gift of the Holy Spirit. And what do we find when that is happening but a constant reshaping of attitudes and new hope in the face of challenges which otherwise seem too great to bear. And my little story sums this up so well that I am not going to make any further comment…**

***A man was asked to paint a boat. He bought the pain and some brushes and began to paint the boat bright red, just as the owner had asked him.***

***When doing the repainting he noticed a small hole in the hull. He hadn’t been asked to mend it and it wasn’t really his skill but without too much difficulty the boat was made watertight again. When he finished painting he received his money – and left.***

***The next day the owner of the boat came with more money – far more than the original job was worth. The painter was very surprised and assumed the owner had forgotten that he had settled up the previous day.***

***‘But this isn’t for the paint job. This is for mending the hole’. ‘That was no big deal’ , said the painter ‘and it certainly wasn’t worth all this…’***

***‘Ah, you don’t understand’, said the owner ‘when I asked you to paint the boat, I forgot to ask you to fix the hole. When the boat dried, my children took the boat out on a fishing trip. They didn’t know there was a hold in the hull and I wasn’t at home to tell them.***

***When I got home and saw that they had taken the boat out to sea, I was desperate because I suddenly remembered about that hole. Imagine how relieved I was when I saw them happily returning with their catch of fish!***

***Then I went and examined the boat and saw that you had mended the hole. Don’t you see what you have done: you saved the lives of my children! I simply don’t have enough money to pay for your kindness in repairing the boat’.***

***Dear friends, you will never know what has come of the times when you have quietly helped, sustained, wiped away tears, listened attentively to someone in trouble or repaired ‘leaks’ in all kinds of situations. Along the way you may have repaired holes in numerous boats without realising just how many lives you may have saved.***

***Platinum Jubilee, an adult Baptism, Pentecost. They are all signs of God’s Spirit at work in our world.***