

Reflection on the Acts Ch 8 verses 14-17 and Luke's Gospel 3.15-17, 21-22 for 12th January 2025 for the Second Sunday of Epiphany by Revd Claire Robertson

Today we are celebrating the Second Sunday in the season of Epiphany. If you look up the word "*Epiphany*" in a dictionary you will find that it can be "*an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure*". It is a moment of revelation.

The season of Epiphany begins with the visit of the Magi, the wise men from the East bearing gifts for the infant Christ and ends at Candlemas with the Presentation of the infant Christ in the Temple on 2nd February.

Each Sunday during this season the gospel readings feature someone either making the discovery that Jesus is Christ our Saviour or else disclosing that amazing fact to others.

Last week the Magi from the East featured, in the gospel of Matthew, kneeling in adoration at the feet of the toddler Jesus. This week, in Luke's gospel, John the Baptist is pointing others to Christ as he baptises them and we also have an account of John baptising Jesus with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus as he was baptised. In Acts it is the Gentiles who receive God's Holy Spirit with Peter and John laying their hands on them.

We are not told in Acts Ch. 3 how the new believers manifested the outpouring of the Spirit but in Acts 2 and Acts 10 the outpouring was accompanied by the gift of tongues. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are abundant and each person is given a different combination of gifts to help build up the community. Some of them are listed by Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians Ch. 12 and Romans Ch. 12. They range from prophecy to administration, and include the gift of giving and the gift of encouragement.

Jesus at his Last Supper promises his friends that he will send them the Holy Spirit. Jesus says "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

God, as Jesus promised, has continued to reveal himself to people through the ages through the Holy Spirit. Some of these revelations have been written down such as the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth century or the Revelations of Divine Love by our local anchoress, Julian of Norwich, in the fourteenth century.

God continues to reveal himself to us through his spirit in personal ways - a passage of scripture that speaks straight to our heart, a moment of pure joy which

infuses our spirit for no particular reason that we can identify or a piece of art or music or craft that enables us to come closer to God as Sue experienced at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

As I was preparing this reflection I asked a parishioner for their thoughts on the Holy Spirit.

Some of these thoughts I will share with you before I play the short piano improvisation they inspired as we ask God for a fresh outpouring of his Holy Spirit on us this morning and consider what gifts God has given us in our community and how he wishes us to use them.

“The Holy Spirit is my friend, my comforter, that still, pure spark inside that enables me to know God. A mystery, a beautiful one, because the Spirit is like a mist that can never be held, grasped, contained or bottled.

The Holy Spirit whispers to me, in tones so hushed that they could be the leaves on the breeze, but also, sometimes, moving with the inexorable, unstoppable great power of a tidal wave, that trickles forward yet can sweep me up, but still has no beginning or end, no before or after, and no edge or limit.

The Holy Spirit comes upon us, and dwells within us, and we can choose whether or not to listen, to hear that presence of God within us, that still, sweet voice, that whisper of eternity straight from and also into the depths of our hearts.”

Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, comforter, fall afresh on us this morning, kindle in us the fire of your love that we might have the courage to develop the gifts you have given us to build up our community.

Amen.