

Today is Pentecost Sunday; the day when we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and upon ourselves, to embolden and to empower both them and us to **be** like and to **do** like our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will recall that when Jesus ascended into heaven he told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and there to wait for power from on high. So they went and waited and prayed together.

For the last 10 days, since we celebrated the Ascension, we have used these pretend fireworks to symbolise that waiting.

They waited; then it happened.

The disciples were together, locked in a room in Jerusalem, fearful for their personal security, uncertain about how their fellowship might continue; yet waiting and praying as Jesus had told them.

Then it happened: The rush of a violent wind; the appearance of light as of flames descending upon them; the welling up within them of new dynamism as God's Holy Spirit surged out of their innermost being.

Just like an apparently inert firework lit from the outside which bursts into life, releasing its contents in a spectacular display of light and beauty and power, **the disciples** burst from their hidden self-containment into a new life of high visibility to others and of spectacular power and beauty. Once lit from on high, the Holy Spirit within the disciples empowered them to live dynamic and effective lives as **inheritors** of Jesus' ministry and as leaders of the early Church.

What Jesus had told them came true that day: *'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'*. (Acts 1v8)

As in their enthusiasm, the disciples spilled out into the cosmopolitan marketplace, filled with visitors from throughout the then-known world, their Gospel message was somehow proclaimed; their firework display was seen, heard and appreciated by all who gathered there. Truth, beauty and joy were revealed to the world.

Our fireworks have been waiting for their own 'tongue of flame' to light them up so that they can explode into life; and maybe we have too!

I spoke at the 8am last week of my own impatience, and my desire not to bother waiting but to do what God might want doing in my own strength, without waiting for power from on high. I suspect many Christian people also do what they think God might want doing in their own strength: maybe they get fed up of waiting; or fear that God might want them to do something they don't want to do; or think that God doesn't do that sort of thing anymore; or they are just impatient like me and want to get on with it!

The great lesson of Pentecost is that the power of God **does come** to those people *like you and me* who wait and pray; and **then** the Holy Spirit enables and empowers **them** to do way more than they thought might be possible.

The display of my firework of a life, or your firework of a life, may be nothing like as spectacular as that of the original disciples; *but, however small, we each have our own unique and beautiful part to play in the great firework display of the church down the ages.*

Which brings us to today's baptism of little Lara Spry.

Lara's life is a bit like this particular firework - a sky rocket.

As she is now, Lara is waiting to be set on fire by God the Holy Spirit, just like all the other fireworks. In the baptismal service we shall pray that the Holy Spirit descends upon her and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell in her. And something real does happen in that service; **it is as if God lights the blue touch paper of her life** and sets her aglow.

Have you ever lit and watched a sky rocket? Once the blue touch paper is lit, nothing seems to happen for a while; it just glows quietly. But then you begin to hear a whooshing sound that gathers intensity and suddenly (woosh) the rocket speeds heavenwards and [bang] there is this spectacular display of beauty across the heavens.

Make no mistake; that is what will begin to happen to Lara today. God will light the blue touch paper of her life at her baptism, and probably not much will be seen to happen for several years; she'll just glow quietly.

But then, in God's good timing, we'll hear the whooshing sound and Lara will take off heavenwards and we shall see a beautiful display of a life lived for her Lord.

What we initiate today, we may not see the results of for years; but the results will surely be seen sometime.

Lara **will** make a beautiful display for her Lord sometime in her life.

So today is **the** day for lighting the fireworks of **all** our lives, and, at the right time, taking our unique and beautiful part in the great firework display of the Church down the ages.

Let us pray: *Gracious God, give us who wait and pray the grace of your Holy Spirit; light up our lives, that we may be empowered to give of ourselves to you and bring truth, beauty and joy to all mankind. In Jesus' name. Amen*