

Something new is happening today. There is a new translation of the Bible. It is in Jamaican patois and is being launched at a Church in North London. I heard about it yesterday as I was listening to the radio. This follows a long campaign by the Jamaican Bible Society. The radio interviewer asked the Reverend Courtney Stewart why it was necessary and he made the point that the Bible makes its greatest impact on people when they hear it in what he described as their 'heart' language. Now I never thought about a 'heart' language before, but I would understand it to mean the language that we speak without a second thought, the language in which we think. We might be able to make ourselves understood in a variety of tongues: a bit of French here, a smattering of Italian there, but, in the end, the language in which we were brought up is the one where we feel at home and secure.

Why have they launched it today. Well, because it is the Feast of Pentecost; and the Acts of the Apostles describes vividly how the Holy Spirit descends in wind and flame on the disciples who go out and boldly proclaim the Good News; suddenly they find that the message they preach is being understood by all present, whatever their race or language. That is because the language of salvation is universal: it speaks to the heart, the centre of gravity of every person.

In the book of Genesis we read about how the whole earth had one language and the same words and how the people decided to build themselves a tower that reached to the heavens and how the Lord scattered the peoples over all the face of the earth and confused their language. This was another consequence of human arrogance and sin which endeavoured to make itself the equal of God. Just as in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve broke the prohibition that God made and reached out to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so here.

We cannot, by our own efforts, make ourselves the equal of God. Any attempt to do so results in catastrophe. But God does make himself the equal of us. He becomes a man in Jesus. He stretches his arms out on the Cross. He heals the rift in the relationship with our heavenly Father and, through Baptism, we do indeed become the children of God.

The coming of the Spirit is the completion of that mystery. It reverses Babel. It tears down the barrier between nations and races. There may be many languages, but the Good News is for everybody: Jews and Greeks, slave and free, Africans and Caribbeans. Whether you are from Tottenham or Tibet, whether you are from Ghana or Gosport, Lagos or Lincoln, you are called into God's family; and that is Good News.

So, what does the Spirit do?

The Spirit teaches us. Through the teaching authority of the Church, the mystery of who Jesus is and what he has accomplished, is unfolded, and we are led deeper into that mystery. The Spirit moves our hearts and minds, prompts us, invites us, nudges us into loving God more deeply, more truly and more unselfishly. The Spirit enables us to pray, kindles our desire, deepens our faith and enables us to love one another.

In his letters, St. Paul was very keen to stress that the Holy Spirit was given to us so that we might be children of God. We are not born to be servants or slaves, whether slaves of sin, addiction, ambition or of money. For us as God's children, the modern consumerist motto 'I shop therefore I am' is just not true. We are given the Holy Spirit to be free, free to be our true selves, free to be children of God.

The Father expressed his love for us by sending his Son into our world as a man so that it would be possible for us to participate in the very life of the Holy Trinity. In his brief life on earth there was only so much that the Son of God could do. But the Ascension of Jesus to heaven was the prelude to the coming of the Holy Spirit so that we might experience the full presence of the third person of the Trinity too. The coming of the Spirit meant that God would not only dwell with us but even *within* us, enabling us perfectly to follow the Son in all that he taught.

Let us pray that the same Spirit will continue to be poured out, inspire us to follow Christ, but also inspire us to serve, to learn, to pray, to live the Gospel, proclaim the Gospel; let the Spirit help us to put away self, to put on Christ, to receive his gifts, to bear his fruits, to let the light of Christ shine to the glory of God the Father.