

30.5.69
21.5.70 (in part)
25.5.72

Factus Est - Antiochus "Suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a mighty wind blowing" — the breath of the Holy Spirit of God's love which, since the first Pentecost day, has never ceased literally to inspire the life of Christ's church and the hearts of all men of goodwill in every time and place, and is active in the world and in us today, also. It is through Him and in the power He gives that ~~we~~^{men} can and do pray to our Father in heaven. In this week following Pentecost we ought to take time in our prayer and reflection to think about the Holy Spirit and His mission and work: the feast of Pentecost itself gives some clues to this, in the symbolism it uses. First of all, it's an Easter, paschal celebration, stressing one aspect of the redemption offered to mankind in what Christ has done for us in dying and rising from death. It's the fulfilment and completion of His passage from this world back to His Father while He yet remains always present with us. [The ancients, and some people still today, put great significance in the symbolism of numbers — the celebration of Easter became 50 days, and the whole period known as Pentecost, because 50 (7 sevens + 1) expressed for them completeness, and everything Christ did to bring mankind back to the friendship of God is summed up in the paschal celebration.] But the early Christians didn't invent the 50th day festival — in fact, they took it over (and rather slowly at that) from a Jewish festival of the same name; only, they gave it a deeper significance. Two ideas were at work here: the celebration of the first harvest, and the celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt Sinai some time after he'd led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, across the Red Sea. The Church used both these events in celebrating the giving of the Holy Spirit by Her risen Lord and Master, in which she found the fulfilment of the meaning of God's revelation in

His saving actions on behalf of Israel — exactly as Peter had himself done on Pentecost morning when, accused of being drunk, he'd explained the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and its significance, in terms of the 'shadows cast before' of the O.T. Pentecost had ~~been~~^{marked} the formation of God's people to whom the Law of Moses was given: with the coming of the Holy Spirit, a new people was being formed, not a particular nation or race or country, or with any human limits of acceptability, but embracing in principle all men everywhere. A new covenant was made and ratified between God and men, sealed in the offering of Christ's own humanity and life in obedience to God: a new law was given, written now, not on stone, but in the hearts of men by the action of the Spirit who is God's love — an interior, personalised law which we obey because we love God and everything He wants and plans for us, not simply because we're told to do this or not do that. This is the action of the Spirit in the hearts of men who, through Him, accept, believe, trust in and love Christ who is alive, who is the centre and meaning of all existence, forever human and divine. He is the first fruit of the real harvest of God's infinite love for all He has created — the transformation worked by the Holy Spirit (so noticeably in the apostles and in all the saints since then) is the gathering together of the only harvest that counts, bringing mankind into the life and love of God, for which men were made. [For a prayer in music today, listen to ^{part of} an old setting, by Dunstable, of that lovely Pentecost prayer — Come Holy Spirit, Veni Sancte Spiritus. MUSIC PRAYERS.

There is much more to be said about the feast of Pentecost and the action of the

Holy Spirit than I have already, rather complicatedly perhaps, tried to indicate — and I intend to return to it later. For the moment, though, let's prepare a little for the ^{celebration} (liturgy) of this coming Sunday which is Trinity Sunday. Actually, this is a rather puzzling ^{feast-day} (celebration) and the history of Trinity Sunday shows a fair amount of hesitation and confusion about the purpose of having such a feast-day at all. It's quite a late addition to the ^{church} (liturgical) year, and varied in its placing before finally settling down on the first Sunday after Pentecost (i.e. earlier had been the feast of all saints). The special preface for the Eucharistic prayer on this day only became the general Sunday preface about 200 years ago — because, really, every Sunday is a celebration of the Trinity and unity of God, our Father whom we worship through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit who is given to us. But this preface, like the whole feast, has more the air of a profession of faith than a celebration of God's saving action in Christ, for which we praise and thank Him; presumably for this reason, other ^{more} typically Eucharistic preface-prayers have now been introduced. But Trinity Sunday can still be looked on, and ^{kept} (celebrated) as a kind of summing up of all we've been thinking about and celebrating since Easter — because the events of Easter have introduced us to and revealed to us the intimate life of God who loves us and is not a distant, lonely, impersonal Being, but 3 persons whose life and love we're destined and invited to share. [In this light we can read and understand the scripture readings for Sunday which, at first sight, especially the first one, from Isaiah, may seem quite unconnected and formidable. Thro' the Holy Spirit, we are heirs of God, co-heirs with Xt, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.]