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Pentecost, 23 May 2010

Acts 2:1-11; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17,25-27

This morning we celebrate the feast of Pentecost – a story which enlivens the imagination and seems to offer undreamt of possibility. The sheer power of Luke's description of this event inspires hope and creates wonder. People gathered in fear behind locked doors suddenly empowered with an appearance that is like rushing wind with utterance that can only be described as tongues of fire.

The story emphasizes that this gift comes from God, and comes with power. It is addressed first to the dispersed Jewish community – for the Gospel must first come to this community as these are God's special people – the ones whom God has chosen. The movement beyond this community will happen later. But God's action begins in God's home with the Jewish people. This Spirit fastens upon the individual disciples and transforms them powerfully. This is a simple story.

But how does this story continue within us? Where does this reality enter our lives? What is the transformation which God works within us?

For ultimately it is a story about the possibilities which God creates within each of our lives. We see it in the microcosm of the early Jerusalem community, in the story of the beginnings of a community forged by the action of God.

The story takes us back to the beginning of the Christian faith community reminding us that our beginning is with God. So what happens to us as individuals of faith and communities of faith is not about us but about God. And it is about how we may grow the community of faith, not how we feel about the community. It begins with God and ends with mission.

Pentecost is about our focus. So often our focus is on the periphery and not the centre. The story of Pentecost bids us bring our focus back to the centre, away from ourselves and towards God; away from survival and towards mission.

The question for each one of us is what this means in our own lives. It is not something which can be declared like a programme. In the story in Acts each person hears the disciples speaking in their own language. It is something which speaks to each one of us in the context in which we live our lives, something directed towards us as an individual.

But when God speaks to us God draws us into community and from there to give our own unique voice to the proclamation of the Gospel. And our voice is to speak of the power and presence of God in order to draw others into this community as well.

But first we need to hear God speaking to us. And God will speak, and in a way and a language each of us can understand. We need to spend time quietly listening for this voice of God. And when we hear to join our voice to the chorus which speaks of the glory and power of God.