



PENTECOST

Moderator's message 2026

I sit and remember. In the middle of the night, I remember. I remember when I go for a walk.

The journey of learning and submitting to the Holy Spirit is never static or confined to theological or academic terms. When I recently asked a group of primary school children who the Holy Spirit is, one of the boys answered immediately: "The petrol that makes the Church go". A good start, I thought, from one so young, but knowing there will be some Trinitarian adjustments along the way. St Patrick described the Spirit as the "heat and power" accompanying the light of the Son.

Pentecost. When I was growing up, our Church didn't observe Pentecost Sunday. It was considered too inconvenient to break into the current preaching series. In my early 20s, I followed the crowd and attended a local Pentecostal Church, where attempts were made to replicate at least some of the Acts 2 Pentecost event. In one service, the pastor had a great idea, kind of like a new revelation, that the mark of a true Christian was speaking in tongues. Within moments, we were lined up at the front as dear pastor came down the row, one by one, doing his magic, and my contemporaries were slain in the Spirit. **I wasn't.**

The pastor returned to try again, and after the third attempt, with me still standing, I was told in no uncertain terms that I had a rebellious spirit, wasn't a Christian, and not to come again. I didn't even stay for the end of the service. It took me a long time to recover emotionally with all the mixed feelings of being rejected by God. Eventually, I returned to a Presbyterian Church to find healing from the spiritual abuse I had received.

The teaching and example in that Church was that some people may be blessed with a Pentecost experience with all the bells and whistles, but for most, the Holy Spirit comes gently with the laying of hands and prayer to begin the journey of transformation into the likeness of Christ.

I am still on that journey. I have glimpsed its end in the physical sense, and all is well with my soul, because the Holy Spirit is my Comforter.

Here is what I have learned. The Holy Spirit is the tangible, present third person of the Trinity, one we can speak to and receive from. Sometimes I'm concerned in church services, on Pentecost and other days, when the liturgy in its rhythm recites, "Come, Holy Spirit, come," and then carries on with the rhythm without a pause or second thought. The Holy Spirit has come. The Spirit is here and is the heat and power accompanying the light of the Son.

At times, I sense a "fuel shortage" to use my young friend's analogy, and there is a sorrow in my heart. A form of religion is played out, rather than the Holy Spirit worshipped and acknowledged. Jesus makes a telling comment in his conversation with the Samaritan women when they are discussing what form of worship is correct, Samaritan or Jewish.

"But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

Watch out. The Holy Spirit has come.

Peter

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