

The fire of His love



The Bishop Speaks

Pentecost is one of our three great annual feasts and celebrations in the Church: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The birth of our Lord Jesus, his resurrection from the Dead, and his gift of the Holy Spirit. But unlike Christmas and Easter, Pentecost does not grab our attention so much; it has not entered our consciousness, our imagination, and our culture in the same way that Christmas and Easter have. We make special plans each year for Christmas and Easter, but we often approach Pentecost no differently to any other Sunday of the year. Why is that?

I think it's partly because Pentecost has not been commercialised. Our supermarkets and department stores have not yet worked out a way to market Pentecost and make money out of us. On the bright side, whilst at Christmas the child Jesus has to compete for our attention with Santa, and at Easter Christ crucified and risen has to compete with the Easter Bunny, at Pentecost the Holy Spirit has no competitors. I think we Catholics *ourselves* have to ask whether we give due attention to Pentecost Sunday.

Why do we pay more attention to Christmas and Easter than to Pentecost? It's worth each of us asking ourselves whether we are, in fact, more influenced by the commercial world than we are by our faith and our Church. And I'm not just talking here about Pentecost. I'm talking about our attitudes to a whole range of issues and problems. Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us, his Church, in the ways of truth and love. Yet in recent years the attitude of most Catholics to a whole range of moral and social issues is more aligned with pop culture, the mass media, and social media than to the teachings of Jesus, his Gospel, and his Church.

Saint Paul says to us in the Second Reading, "Your

interests are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you." It is something that we all must ask ourselves from time to time, and Pentecost Sunday is as good a time as any: Am I guided in my life by the Holy Spirit, by the "Advocate" that Jesus promised, by the Spirit who makes me a child of God and who will raise me from the dead? Or am I guided and led by the nose by the popular opinions of the day?

The name for today's feast is very interesting. The word "Pentecost" simply means fifty. Even before the time of Jesus, the Jews already celebrated Pentecost as the fiftieth day after their most important feast of Passover. It was also the time of year that they were beginning to harvest their crops, so at Pentecost they would bring the first fruits of their harvest and offer them to God in gratitude, not only for their crops but for everything he provided. So, when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles on the day of Pentecost, which was also fifty days after his resurrection the early Christians understood what this meant.

It meant that it was time to present the fruits of their labour to God. Jesus had often spoken to his disciples about the need to bear good fruit by their lives and actions. But since his death and resurrection his disciples have not yet born him any fruit: they have not yet spread the good news of God's love and Jesus' salvation; they have not yet shared their faith in Jesus with anybody!

Although Jesus' followers believed in Him, they were still afraid to teach him publicly and to proclaim him to all the nations. They had to wait for the Holy Spirit to take hold of them and give them courage in the face of ridicule and rejection.

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday, they not only understood that now was the

FRONT COVER: Mrs Belinda Burton leads the procession for the Liturgy of the Word at the Catholic Schools Office System Conference 2019



Bishop Michael Kennedy, Fr Roel Llave, Fr Paul Aguilar, Deacon Paul Manvell, Fr Vicente Amaro, Fr James Poovathinkal & Fr Sabu Pulimalayil joined Fr Vic Ignacio for the 121st Philippine Independence Day celebration held Quirindi on Pentecost Sunday

time to start their mission and present the fruits of their labour to God, they also understood that in the gift of the Holy Spirit God had given them the ability, the power, the grace to be able to do it!

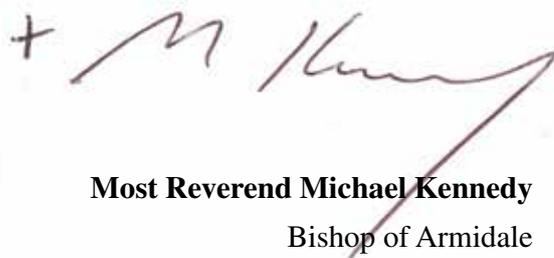
Many of us are also shy about proclaiming our faith in the Lord Jesus. But, like the Apostles and early Christians, we too have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is time for us to share our faith with others by our words and our actions.

I bet we have all heard of Israel Folau and are reasonably familiar with the details of his case with Rugby Australia. Whatever the pros or cons of *how* Israel went about publicly expressing his Christian faith, he is a young man who has impressed me enormously. He has stood by his statement that the only way for *any* sinner to be saved is by Jesus Christ. In the face of enormous pressure, he has publicly put God and his faith ahead of his career and a four-million-dollar contract. It's hard to imagine him or anybody being able to do this without the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps today, fifty days after Easter is the time for

us to present the fruits of our labour to the Lord. You and I can pray that the gift of God's Holy Spirit does not lie dormant within us; that we will always have the wisdom to put God first and the courage to share our faith with others.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love!



Most Reverend Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Armidale

Edited version of Bishop Kennedy's Pentecost Sunday Homily