REFLECTIONS ON THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

In the run up to Pentecost, or Whitsun, I am going to write a few words about each of the gifts of the Spirit which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12. These are wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues and interpretation.

I will give Bible references, so you might like to have a Bible to hand.

In the Old Testament these gifts were bestowed upon some chosen individuals, but since the death and resurrection of Jesus, and as prophesied by Joel, (Joel 2 v 28) they have become available to all his followers. Every Spirit–filled believer may receive and use any gift, but some gifts seem to be more suited to some people than others. And there is a degree of overlap among the gifts. I will be as clear as I can.

The most important thing about the gifts of the Spirit is that they must be used with love.

May I suggest that on the Day of Pentecost, we each choose a gift that we would like God to give us, and ask him for it. The gifts are given for the benefit of the Christian community. It might be difficult to use some of them while we are socially distancing, but perhaps not impossible. And life won’t be like this for ever!

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is the ability to make good judgments, and sometimes, in this context particularly, being able to differentiate between good and evil spirits.

One example of discernment in the Old Testament is when Samuel thought that the priest Eli was calling him, but he eventually discerned that it was God. (1 Samuel 3)

Jesus always discerned whether people’s intentions were good or bad. He knew the Pharisees were trying to trap him when they asked whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar and he replied, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”. (Matthew 22 v 15-22)

The apostle John wrote in his first letter, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4 v 1)

John the Baptist discerned that Jesus was the Messiah when the Holy Spirit settled on him, like a dove.

And at Pentecost the disciples heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire and they discerned the presence of the Holy Spirit.

People sometimes experience the gift of discernment through the senses. They might see something in a different way or have a strange taste or smell.

PRAYER

Dear Lord

Thank you for sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

May we remember that all your gifts are freely available to us, if we truly want them and if we ask you for them.

May we not dismiss any of your gifts just because they may not be part of our church culture. Please may we be open to them.

May we never belittle the power of the Spirit and the extent to which that power is available to us.

Please forgive us when we do.

Holy Spirit, please fill me now. (*At this point ask the Holy Spirit for one of the gifts if you would like to.)*

Through Jesus Christ

Amen