

## **Meditation - Pentecost 2020**

Dear Friends:

(Read Isaiah 44: 1-8; Acts 2: 1-21; and John 20: 19-23)

May 31<sup>st</sup> is Pentecost Sunday, and we enter a church season that over the years many have called the birthday of the Church. The apostles and other followers of Jesus (including the women) were locked away for fear of the authorities. They knew they had to be careful and alert lest they be arrested.

Fear and apprehension were in the air at Pentecost. The record in Acts 2 hints at fear and apprehension when the “noise like a mighty wind came down” and the apostles started speaking to them in a multitude of languages. The devout Jews who were gathered for an agricultural festival (Pentecost) were “bewildered”; “they were amazed and wondered”, and “perplexed” at the apostles' behaviour (Acts 2: 6, 7, 12).

Fear and apprehension are mentioned in the reading from Isaiah (44: 3 & 8). Isaiah has the Lord saying: “Fear not, nor be afraid”.

Fear and apprehension fill the air today throughout the world. When will it be safe to leave our “bubbles” and greet our neighbours, friends and families again? Covid-19 and the worldwide pandemic have caused us all to be careful and alert, just like these long-ago followers of Jesus. Our survival today, in the spring of 2020, depends on some fear and apprehension.

But then there is the out-of-control kind, the kind that paralyses and kills.

Here is where the Spirit of God saves us. The Spirit of God replaces the spirit of abnormal fear and apprehension. For faith displaces fear – all kinds of fear. It did at Pentecost. The apostles and followers of Jesus were apprehensive about the future. Jesus was gone. However, God's Spirit touched them and replaced that fear and apprehension. The Spirit encouraged them to move out and to become the feet, the hands, and the heart of Jesus in the world – hence the birthday of the Church.

This is the message of Pentecost – that fear and apprehension can be replaced by the energy and calm of God's Spirit. Covid-19 must not create in us a spirit that paralyses and kills us. Be alert – yes, but do not collapse into paralyzing fear and loneliness. As Jesus said to his disciples: “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you...receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:23)

And the words from Isaiah: “Fear not, nor be afraid.”

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Milton †