PENTECOST 2026

"When the day of Pentecost (Shavuot) arrived, the Apostles were all together in one place."

We are gathered like the apostles in the upper room, we are gathered with one clear desire – that God will pour out again the gift of His Holy Spirit upon us. We want to experience what the first disciples of Jesus experienced. We want what the Sequence that was sung before the Gospel spoke of - our wounds healed, our strength renewed, we desire the fire of Pentecost because this is the gift that God wants to give, a Church fully alive, a Church radiating the joy of His presence, a Church empowered to proclaim His Kingdom. This is what we want. This is what we need.

For 64 years there has been a very strong and consistent encouragement from five Popes. An encouragement to rediscover, reappropriate, and reactivate what we have just heard described in the Acts of the Apostles. This powerful and fruitful action of the Holy Spirit did not come to an end with the death of the first disciples and so it is in our own day, in our own life we desire to experience a new Pentecost. St Pope Paul VI said in 1972 said:

"More than once I have asked myself what the greatest need of the Church is…what is the primary and ultimate need. I must say with holy fear…the Church needs her eternal Pentecost; she needs fire in her heart, words on her lips and glance that is prophetic."

The great St John Paul II speaking in 1998 said:

"Today, I would like to cry out: Open yourselves to the gift of the Holy Spirit! Accept gratefully and obediently the charisms which the Spirit never ceases to bestow upon us."

Pope Benedict echoed these sentiments in New York in 2008, he said: "*Let us implore from God the grace of a new Pentecost for the Church. May tongues of fire, combining burning love of God and neighbour with zeal for the spreading of Christ's Kingdom, descend upon us."*

My friends, gathered here on this day of Pentecost 2026, is there anything more that you or I would truly desire than a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit? There is a world, a country, a family, a parish, a monastic community, a school hungry and waiting to be evangelised, transformed, and energised. Many would say that there is an amazing move of God already taking place in our time, He is already at work, and we seem to be in a season when there is an extraordinary openness to the Gospel. People are searching for meaning, open to a spiritual dimension to life and they are looking to the Catholic Church, to you and me, as disciples of Jesus for answers.

Now we can complain that our congregations are smaller and ageing or even that the number of vocations to our monastery have shrunk, but here is the challenge; will we step out, will we step through the door that God seems to be opening while it is still open? If it is true, as it seems to be, that young people, and some not so young are in search of the truth, returning to faith, then this is not something simply to be observed, enjoyed, or just encouraged by. It demands a very focused response.

So, are we ready, are we ready to make such a response? Are we equipping ourselves to journey with those who will not have come from a traditional faith background? Are we really looking for the lost or have we settled for decline? Yesterday I received a letter that came as a complete

surprise. It was from a young man, 34 years old. Someone I have never met. He is in His Majesty's Prison. He told me of his hunger for God and his desire to grow spiritually. How he is reading the Bible daily, saying five decades of the rosary and attending and playing the piano at Mass in the Prison Chapel. Having read St Teresa of Avila's book *The Interior Castle* he realises there is more. He wants to grow in faith.

None of us knows for certain just how long this window of opportunity will be open. Therefore, can I humbly offer three simple suggestions: Three ways that we might possibly respond. Our first response is, **prayer**: "*Your kingdom come, your will be done.*" In fact, we cannot ever underestimate the part played by prayer in bringing about the revival we are seeking. God moves when we pray. But I am not thinking of the occasional bidding prayer that God should renew His Church and open the hearts of unbelievers to the truth. I am thinking of a prayer that genuinely costs. You see, the intensity and the sacrificial quality of our prayer will itself reveal the sincerity of our desire to see vocations arrive at our monastery or new Christians received into the full communion with the Church. What's the price you are prepared to pay to see God's Kingdom come?

As I say this, I think of two women, probably unknown to you, they certainly were to me until some years ago. Peggy and Christine Smith, 84 and 82 respectively. Peggy was completely blind, and Christine bent double with arthritis. The two sisters were so desperately disturbed by the depressed state of their Church on the Hebridean Island of Lewis that they took matters into their own hands. They decided that this situation required drastic action and so three nights a week from 10.00pm until 3.00am they interceded for their Island and for a return to the Christian faith of its young population. They enlisted the support of others, and it went on for many weeks until the revival began, and the Church was full to overflowing.

There has never been a spiritual renewal that was not established upon a solid foundation of united committed prayer. The world is shaking, and we the believing body of Christ need to pray fervently that His unshakable Kingdom will come and advance. No prayer, no renewal. Secondly, **we need to be confident**. Not in ourselves or our bright schemes, our plans, and programs. Rather we need to be confident in the Word of God and its power to heal, challenge and restore.

We are told that the sales of Bibles in the UK have increased by 106% in the past year. This ought to encourage us in our Christian communities to provide people with the scriptures. What if every one of our parishes, the Abbey and College included, what if we had a generous supply of Bible's or copies of the New Testament that we could give away free? We need to shepherd people and mentor them in faith, but we cannot do this unless we are steeped in God's transformative Word. People are hungry for the truth but there is a danger they try and satiate this hunger in the wrong way with the wrong things. We need to get God's Word into people's hands and hearts. What could you do, what could you give so that others may have an opportunity to read His Word?

That brings me to my final point, **we need the boldness and courage to invite** others to experience the goodness, mercy, and healing of God. When was the last time you invited someone new to come to your parish? When was the last time you had a conversation with a relative, next-door neighbour someone in Tesco's and invited them to come with you to Church? To come and discover who Jesus is?

What if we tried to engage with those who have no faith, but who have lots of questions? What if instead of, or as well as, advertising tours of the Abbey Church we gave people an opportunity

to explore the meaning of faith and life? What if instead of small groups in our separate parishes we worked together: Abbey and parishes. It is God's Kingdom we want to come not the success or otherwise of our separate communities of faith. It's time to be bold. To try new things. To step out in faith. It is time to develop and cultivate a culture of Pentecost: Prayer, Confidence, Invitation. Let me conclude with words of John Paul II in Coventry in 1982:

'On the first day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and upon Mary and filled them with his power. Today we remember that moment and we open ourselves again to the gift of that same Holy Spirit. In that Spirit we are baptized. In that Spirit we are confirmed. In that Spirit we are called to share in the mission of Christ. In that Spirit we shall indeed become the People of Pentecost, the apostles of our time. "Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love." Amen.

Abbot Robert Igo, OSB

Ampleforth Abbey

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