

If you were asked “What is electricity?” what would you say? If you were a physicist you might give the answer : “electricity a form of energy resulting from the existence of charged particles (such as electrons or protons), either statically as an accumulation of charge or dynamically as a current”. But most of us would not give that answer, we would say it’s what makes our gadgets, appliances and lights work. That is more what it does, than what it actually is. You might also say it is dangerous and can kill. But that is describing its effects, not the thing itself.

The problem with describing what electricity is in itself, is that it is invisible – you can’t get hold of it and put it into a box. You only know it’s there if you can see or feel the result. Just looking at a wire, you would not be able to tell whether it was live or dead. It is also not much good unless you connect something to it, plug something in and switch it on.

Can we say the same of the Holy Spirit – we can’t see him, but we can see what effect he has if we are willing to connect ourselves with him. It is one thing saying I believe in the Holy Spirit, but that is not much good if we do nothing to activate his gifts in our lives. It is like saying “I

believe that lamp will work and lighten up this dark place” without actually plugging it in and switching it on.

We certainly can’t define or describe the Holy Spirit; we can name him, in the ways he has revealed to us, such as Third person of the Holy Trinity, Lord, Creator, Giver of Life – but to know the Holy Spirit we actually have to take the plunge, and connect ourselves with him, for his divine energy to flow into our lives, and then his effects will be seen.

If we look at the apostles at Pentecost, we can certainly see the difference that he made; before they were there in the upper room, praying and waiting.

Then when the Spirit came they heard something and felt something. They heard a wind blowing through the room. They felt the breeze and they felt something like tongues of fire settle upon each of them. Then they experienced something. They were no longer afraid. They opened up the doors of the upper room and began preaching to the pilgrims in Jerusalem. All these pilgrims also could understand them even though they were from many different lands and spoke different languages.

With the Holy Spirit they knew what to say. Their minds

were infused with grace and knowledge to speak before kings and judges. They always knew how best to explain the message of Christ to anyone willing to listen. Then, as the early church grew throughout the Roman Empire the apostles experienced persecution and torture. Yet, they continued fearlessly to spread the news that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They could endure great suffering and death knowing that their Lord would save them just as surely as God had raised Jesus.

A bit different from the group of frightened men who ran away from Jesus when he was arrested. The effects of the Holy Spirit were plainly seen and felt.

For the Spirit to make himself present in the world today, as he did at the first Pentecost, he needs believers to be open to him, to connect themselves with him, as did those believers at the first Pentecost, when his effects were clearly seen and felt, and the result was that the church came to birth and carried out the mission of Christ in the world.

Some say that the Church today needs another Pentecost. I am not sure that would be possible, yes we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost every year, but that outpouring was a dramatic and once-for-all powerful intervention of

God in human history, as was the incarnation. And we certainly need a renewal of his gifts and fruits. Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Yes, we need to allow the Spirit to fill our hearts, we need to connect ourselves with him, so that his grace flows through as electricity through a wire; but the effects of this need also to be seen and felt in the world today, as powerfully as at that first Pentecost. Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit for a reason, that we might carry on his work in the world. As Bishop Mark said in his recent Pastoral Message “Go make disciples....” – with him, let’s do it.