

# A Reflection on the Readings for Pentecost Sunday

## by Bernard Traynor

Imagine for a second that you are an intergalactic traveller. You're planning the trip of a lifetime and you have called up evidence showing the attractiveness of the various destinations on offer. You look at those describing Earth. You see the beautiful pictures of Niagara Falls, the plains of the Serengeti, of sunsets around the globe, of oceans and wildlife. This one is a possibility and you decide to dig further and you see that there is some footage of the people who live there. Its available on the thought consciousness stream which replaced the internet about three hundred years ago. Your initial impressions are dashed as you stare incredulously. Guns, missiles, displaced peoples and so much aggression. Why, you wonder, can beings surrounded by so much beauty show such levels of violence and hostility. Why spend so much energy building walls and erecting roadblocks and barriers when you could be learning about the beauty that surrounds you. There must be somewhere else in the cosmos that is a better place to visit. You scratch Planet Earth from your list and look elsewhere. The Universe is so vast with endless possibility. There must be somewhere better

Today is the Birth-Day of the Church. This weekend some of us will be captivated by the Royal wedding. Harry and Megan have plans. They are no different to us. We, too, have plans. Sometimes life gets in the way of those plans, other times life and plans co-exist in perfect harmony. Such moments are rare and are experiences of intense peacefulness and beauty. But Pentecost Sunday is different. On Pentecost Day we put our own plans to one side. It's time to reflect not so much on our own plans as on God's Plan for his creation, and, in particular, for His Church. God does not want barriers nor fences, He is no fan of borders nor of focussing on what makes us different instead of what we share in common. In the first reading from Acts we hear the symbolic account of the removal of language barriers. The language of love and forgiveness is universal. It is the easiest language to learn but the hardest to put into practice. If the first reading teaches us anything it is that we must never erect barriers, we should always strive to tear them down. Barriers create mistrust. We hear a lot of talk about frictionless borders. To the mind of this individual, at least, such talk is utter bunkum. Borders create friction. They are lines of demarcation where difference is emphasised.

Paul warns us in the second reading from Galatians that those of us who pursue a life of feuds and wrangling, jealousies, bad temper, quarrels and disagreements are as far from the Kingdom of God as it is possible to be. We are to be people of peace - learning to accept our differences. We are each of us unique; yes, there are differences of opinion, of taste and of understanding. None of us is superior to the other. We are all different and we rejoice in those differences because we are all equally valid. We do not make an issue of those differences but we use them for mutual benefit and development. This should be our blueprint as we go through life, treating everyone as we would like to be treated ourselves. Christians do not erect barriers, nor do they establish borders. Christians do not build walls for they know that part of God's plan meant that the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

While I have been typing these words a pair of Goldcrests have been working away at the bush outside the window. They have young to feed and they have returned time and again for another mouthful of tiny insects. The Goldcrest is the smallest bird in the UK weighing less than 6 grammes. I know where they're nesting but I have not disturbed their family. So, I am left to imagine the size of their young. Not one of them will fall to the ground without God knowing. We are worth hundreds of these birds and it is to us that God has imparted his Holy Spirit. *Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit.* (Gal 5:25) The Gift of the Spirit demands our generosity in return, but above all it demands that we do all in our power to tear down barriers and walls - **wherever** they exist and **no matter how unpopular** we might become as a consequence.