**The Rt Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson, Bishop of Hull, reflects on John 14.8-17, 25-27 for Pentecost, Sunday 8th June.**

Greetings, family of Christ, in this Pentecost celebration and happy birthday! Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Church. That's what I wanted to invite us to reflect upon this morning; what it means for us to be newborn in the spirit, and to be the new creation, who the Church is in relation to this gift of the indwelling and the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.

But before we think about that specifically, I just wanted to acknowledge to us that the different persons of the Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, can communicate to us in different ways. And I know that some people find one person of that Holy Trinity easier to relate to sometimes than others.

I know that my father, when he came to faith, he shared with me that Jesus made complete sense to him, he had understood Jesus has call and ministry and understood the gift of the Father, but the Holy Spirit was more confusing for him. In fact, we were due to run a half marathon together many years ago now, but on Pentecost Sunday. So, he said, I'll help you run the half marathon, and you can help me understand the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm not sure which of us had the more difficult challenge, but it was an interesting half marathon and conversation about who the Holy Spirit is and the gift of the Holy Spirit for us. So, if you find one part of the Trinity easier to understand, easier to relate to, and others more confusing, then you are in good company.

Each member of the Holy Trinity is a beautiful gift for us and our whole lives are understanding more and more about each member of the Trinity. In Scripture there are so many different words and understandings for each member of the Trinity, the different names that they all have. They don't just have one name; they have many names. So here for Pentecost Sunday, we hear some particular names for the Holy Spirit. We hear the advocate, the one who advocates on our behalf, the one who gives us new birth in Jesus.

So, I want us to think about that and to remind us of earlier in Jesus's earthly ministry and one particular conversation that Jesus had when he was visited in the night by Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, who was trying to understand Jesus's ministry. Jesus speaks to him about the need to be newborn. Nicodemus found that so hard to understand. But here in Pentecost, we experience that new birth. In the first creation, the first beginnings of creation in Genesis, we experience the Ruach, the Spirit of God, hovering over the chaos of the waters and bringing out order and beauty and life and wonder.

We also experience the breath of God, the Ruach, the breath of God, being breathed into Adam, breathed into the mud creature that then becomes life. And so, the Spirit's breath of Pentecost is directly connected to that new creation that we see in the first creation. Jesus is the firstborn of the new creation, and that is because Jesus is fully human and fully divine.

All of humanity dwells in Christ. The way that we love, the way that we fear, the way that we hurt, the way that we are hungry, the needs that we have in our humanity. Jesus is fully, fully human. And Jesus is fully divine, as he says this morning, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” The fullness of God's heart, God's power, God's passion, God's mercy is in Christ. Jesus speaks here about him returning to the Father and his prayer for us, his prayer that we would do greater things than him, that we would be one. As we hear later on in John 17, what's called a high priestly prayer, Jesus is praying that just as he is in God and God, and God the Father is in him, that we, humanity would be in him and in the Father. This oneness that we get the beginnings of in this morning's gospel; we hear the fullness of that intercession in John 17.

The giving of the Spirit is the response in many ways to this prayerful longing between the Father and the Son for oneness, for unity. Humanity and divinity coming to dwell together. That is the Church. That is who we are. We are humanity and divinity in reconciled relationship. Therefore, because of that, the works that we do, that we love Jesus, we obey his commandments. We seek to live out the gifts of the Beatitudes. We seek to fill the hungry with good things. We seek to be ministers of reconciliation, reconciling a unity between ourselves, being peacemakers, becoming people bent upon the holiness of God, who desire holiness. People who are merciful, for God is merciful. And so that's why today is our birthday, because it is the new creation given in the spirit that is made for us as the Church. That is who we are to be. And our calling is huge. Our calling to be the Church, that real calling of who we are, is almost beyond what we can imagine in our day to day.

We hear also in the New Testament, in the epistles, particularly in Ephesians, Paul writing about his understanding of what this means, what it means to be the Church. He says that God designed, that God predestined, that it was God's intention, that it was through the Church that the manifold, the many-coloured wisdom of God, would be made known to the principalities and powers, the authorities in heavenly places. What that’s saying is that actually it's through us, through our mouths, through our lives, as our love for Jesus is lived out by the way that we live, and the words that we say and the things that we proclaim, that we are then revealing who God is to realms that we cannot see, but that we cannot understand, but that we say we believe in, in all that was seen and unseen.

So today, whether we can understand the fullness of what it means to be the Church, or whether we can understand the fullness of the gift of the Spirit, my prayer is that we know that we are new born again in Christ through the spirit, and that the Holy Spirit will dwell within us all, be outpoured afresh amongst us all, and that as the Church, we become who we were born to be. Amen.