



Transcript

Pentecost 2010

The Church of the Transfiguration, 111 Manor Road East, Toronto M4S 1R4 ☎416-489-7798 Fax 416-489-3272
transfiguration@bellnet.ca www.churchofthetransfiguration.ca The Rev'd Canon Michael Burgess, Incumbent

A Prayer for Guidance

Bless and guide, O God, those to whom is entrusted the selection of a priest and pastor for this parish, and prepare the heart of the man or woman chosen, giving that person wisdom, sensitivity, patience, insight and understanding.

Save us, as a parish, from being inward-looking or backward-looking in the work of this church.

*Help us to take our eyes off ourselves and turn them on the world around;
to be less concerned with what we have accomplished and more with what remains to be done;
that with our vision enlarged and our love rekindled we may go forward in faith to attempt new things to your glory,
seeking always to do your will and enlarge your kingdom,
in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

there, but because it wasn't connected up it was absolutely useless.

That's more or less what the early Church was like until the events of Pentecost, which we commemorate this year on May 23rd. It's the day when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of the men, women and children who made up the early Church. It is often referred to — erroneously, in my opinion — as the birthday of the Church. Until that time, everything was there, but it lacked power. And until that power was supplied, the Church was utterly useless.

Nowadays, as we commemorate that special event, we celebrate not so much the birthday of the Church but its empowerment — the young Church was already there, waiting to be empowered, all it needed was the coming of the Holy Spirit. And it is precisely that empowerment that is the cause of our celebration at Pentecost. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, nothing could ever be the same again. And the reason that we celebrate is not because we are remembering a one-off event a couple of thousand years ago, but because the power that the Church received all those years ago is still available to us today, if we did but realise it and claim it.

However, despite being one of the major festivals of the Church year — just as important as Christmas, just as important as Easter — for some unknown reason, this particular holy day in the Church year goes by almost unnoticed by the majority of people. Why is that, I wonder? Maybe it is because we have a somewhat difficult time getting a handle on the Spirit of God.

We wouldn't be the only ones. The late Dorothy L. Sayers, the creator of the fictional detective Lord Peter Wimsey, wrote about a Japanese convert struggling to grasp Christian theology. "Honourable Father, very good," he said to his missionary teacher. "Honourable Son, very good. But Honourable Bird, I do not understand at all!" I suspect that most of us also have difficulty with the concept of "Honourable Bird"!

Again, perhaps we don't understand what exactly happened at the first Pentecost. After all, if we read the account of that day's events which Luke gives us in the Acts of the Apostles, it does take rather a lot of believing if we interpret it literally! Also, it may be that talk about the Holy Spirit is not as sweet as talk about a baby born in a stable and laid in a manger, angels singing in the heavens and shepherds tending their sheep on quiet hillsides. Neither does it offer us the opportunity to eat chocolate eggs and celebrate with the Easter Bunny!

In this issue ...

A Prayer for Guidance, Dynamite Things (A Message from the Rector)	1
Pause for Thought	2
Cartoon, Pause for Thought, To Make You Smile, Good News for Regular Churchgoers, To Make You Think	3
Reflections and Farewell	4
The Best Medicine?, The Secret to Longevity?	5
Upcoming Service Schedule	6

Dynamite Things

My last parish in England was a rural parish on the South East coast. A retired schoolteacher moved there and bought a small bungalow on the outskirts of the village — a dilapidated building in urgent need of restoration. She spent a great deal of money on repairs and improvements, and treated herself to gas-fired central heating. When the day came for the heating to be turned on she received a nasty shock — the nearest gas supply turned out to be almost half a mile away, and it would have cost a fortune to connect her bungalow to the supply. Everything was

Maybe Pentecost doesn't get so much attention because we have not found a way to commercialize it — we don't turn Pentecost into a cultural extravaganza or a national holiday, so it passes unnoticed. And that's a great pity, because this festival is supremely important for the life of the Church, which means that it is important for your life and my life. It is nothing less than the celebration of the plugging in and turning on of the power that enables each one of us to go out and be the Church in the world. And if that's not worth getting excited about, I don't know what is!

So, then, what exactly is the Holy Spirit — or, more accurately, *who* is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is nothing less than God's power and presence in the world. It is the same presence that was moving over the face of the earth when God created the world. It is that same presence that took the form of a baby born to humble parents; the same Spirit of God that walked the earth for 33 years in the person of Jesus Christ, teaching and healing, and proclaiming the love of God for all people. And now, today, it is that same Spirit that is with us; God's Spirit alive and well on this earth, working through his people, the Church — you and me — to bring God's love into the brokenness of this world.

I suspect that, although we may make a courteous nod in the direction of the Holy Spirit, most of us don't think of the third person of the Trinity in terms of power. Let's be honest, most of us don't think about the Holy Spirit at all! And even if we do think about the power of the Spirit, we all too often forget the incredible strength of that power.

Interestingly, the word translates "power" is the Greek word *dunamis*. This word *dunamis* entered the English language when the Swedish chemist and engineer Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-96) made the discovery that became his fortune. He discovered a power stronger than anything the world had known up to that time. He asked a friend of his who was a Greek scholar what the word for "explosive power" was in Greek. His friend told him it was *dunamis*. Nobel said. "Well, then, I am going to call my discovery by that name." So he called his "explosive power" **dynamite**.

The source of the Holy Spirit is God. We believe in the Trinity — God the Father who creates, God the Son who redeems and God the Holy Spirit, who gathers, calls enlightens and sanctifies or makes his people holy. God is one, but at the same time God reveals himself in three different ways. It is this third part of the Trinity, this third manifestation of God, which we celebrate on the Day of Pentecost.

That Spirit is the power of God — the explosive power, the *dunamis* — which upholds the universe itself, and which was poured out upon the first followers of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and which has ever since come to dwell within each one of us who believes.

The Holy Spirit leads and teaches; it helps us to see ourselves and be aware of our faults, it communicates the forgiveness of God; it gives us dreams and visions and

helps us to understand them. The Spirit comforts, sustains, inspires, strengthens, and renews us; and in the end it draws us closer to each other, and to Jesus Christ our brother and to God our Father.

It is the Spirit that makes our faith come alive, and it is the Spirit that enables us to go out and be the Church in the world, sharing the good news of the limitless and unconditional love of God. We believe that the Spirit is all around us, and within us. We need to let that Spirit catch us, engage us, move us, empower us and rise up from its home inside us, and make a difference in our lives. And, when we do that, we can expect to be surprised by God; we can expect good things to occur. If we truly believe in the Spirit and the power of God, we should trust in it and believe that marvellous things — dynamite things — will happen in our own lives.

In this, my final Transcript message to you before my retirement at the end of June, I ask you to have confidence that the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the members of this parish under the leadership of +Patrick, our area bishop and +Colin, our archbishop, will enable dynamite things to happen at the Church of the Transfiguration. I suspect that God, who is always the God of surprises, still has a few things up his sleeve...

I shall miss you very much.

Every blessing,

Your priest

"No love, no friendship, can cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark on it forever."

— *François Mauriac (1885—1970) was a French author, member of the Académie française (1933) and laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1952). He was awarded the Grand Cross of the Légion d'honneur (1958). He is acknowledged to be one of the greatest Roman Catholic writers of the 20th century.*

Cartoon

REVERENDFUN.COM COPYRIGHT GCI, INC.



Thanks to Pam Winn

06-01-2004

LORD, ABOUT MY PRAYER TO RETIRE TO A PLACE ON THE BEACH ...

Copyright Gospel Communications International, Inc - www.reverendfun.com

Good Advice

George MacLeod (1895-1991) was a Scottish pacifist, dedicated to political and social involvement, who served as moderator of the Church of Scotland in 1957-58. In 1967 he was created a life peer as Baron MacLeod of Fuinary. He is probably best remembered as the founder of the Iona Community which has made the tiny island in Scotland a place of pilgrimage for thousands.

A minister of the Church of Scotland, he was famed for the powerful message of his preaching, as when he said we should "pray on our knees as if only God could change the world, and then get up off our knees and live as if only we could change it."

To Make You Smile

The parish priest delivered his Sunday morning service, as usual, but this particular Sunday, it was considerably longer than normal.

Later, at the door, the priest stood shaking hands with parishioners as they left the sanctuary.

One man said, "Your sermon this morning, Father, was simply wonderful — so invigorating and inspiring and refreshing."

Naturally enough, the priest broke into a big smile, only to hear the parishioner add, "Why, I felt like a new man when I woke up!"

Good News for Regular Churchgoers

Regular attendance at church or chapel can be as good for the health as jogging. A recent study at the University of Pittsburgh showed that weekly attendance at a religious service added two to three years to a person's life span compared with three to five for physical exercise and 2.5 to 3.5 years for people who take statins for cholesterol control. "Regular religious attendance is comparable with commonly recommended therapies, and rough estimates suggest religious attendance may be more cost-effective than statins," say researchers. One theory is that it reduces stress levels or that the camaraderie found at church increases the ability to cope with stress.

A similar effect has been found for having friends. Harvard University research shows that men and women who were less likely to attend church, travel, or take part in social activities were 20 per cent more likely to die early than those who socialised the most. Those who engaged least often in activities such as work, shopping, or gardening, were 35 per cent more likely to die prematurely.

It should also be said that regular attendance at church or chapel can be remarkably good for one's eternal life, too!

Something to Think About

There was once a wise woman who found a precious stone in a mountain stream. The next day she met a traveller who was hungry and she opened her bag to share her food.

The traveller saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him. She did and he left, rejoicing over his good fortune — he knew the stone was worth enough to make him very wealthy.

A few days later, however, he returned.

"I've been thinking," the traveller said humbly. "I know how valuable the stone is, but I give it back to you in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Give me what you have in you that enabled you to give me the stone in the first place."

"Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't."

— Richard Bach, writer (born 1936).

Richard Bach is an American writer. He is widely known as the author of the hugely popular 1970's best-sellers "Jonathon Livingston Seagull" and "Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah." His books espouse his philosophy that our apparent physical limits and mortality are merely appearance.

Reflections and Farewell

As we reflect on his upcoming retirement, we are sad to be saying farewell to the Reverend Canon Michael Burgess after almost six years of his strong pastoral presence and his capable leadership as a hardworking priest-in-charge here at the Church of the Transfiguration. His focus has been dominated by a genuine concern for the overall good of the entire church community, and by his desire to share and live out the Gospel of Christ. We will miss his sense of humour, but above all his sense of caring and compassion, often a rock to many. Fr. Michael has always been approachable (even without a joke!). His words of wisdom, often bringing a different perspective to a problem, lead the way to increased understanding.

His unsurpassed dedication for visiting the sick, ministering at nursing homes and retirement homes (snow or rain never a deterrent!) brought comfort to many, and Fr. Michael will be greatly missed in those places as well.

Fr. Michael has been a pillar in the local church community, working with the South Eglinton Network of Congregations, serving on the Diocesan Chaplaincy Committee, and serving as a board member of the Meighan Health Centre, the Salvation Army facility which includes one of the residences where Fr. Michael celebrates the Eucharist on a regular basis.

Fr. Michael's ministry wasn't limited to our neighbourhood, either. He also coached and encouraged one of our youth members, Tanja Futter, as she took up the challenge to volunteer as a young nurse in Africa. He supported her ministry, and his encouragement was immeasurable for her, so far afield from home, faced with a different culture, helping children and mothers who faced many obstacles to wellness.

Fr. Michael made worship meaningful delivering the true essence and value of worship with each service so carefully planned.

We quickly learned to appreciate and value the great pride Fr. Michael took in preparation of the weekly bulletins, always including expository passages, making the readings more informative. We have also appreciated the "spicing up" of the bulletin with a cartoon or two each week! Fr. Michael's background and expertise in musical theatre has been apparent in his exceptional appreciation for appropriate music to reflect the theme of each service, and to blend with the readings throughout--truly artistic and creative. The prayers for each week also illustrated his ability to craft beautiful, effective expressions of concern and gratitude, containing a wide variety of petitions for government leaders, international issues, our families and communities, broken relationships, illness and grief, as well as expressions of gratitude for the abundance of blessings in our lives.

Our daily lives were enriched by Fr. Michael's sermons, always thought provoking, challenging, illuminating, so often re-shaping our less informed views. These professionally-crafted sermons served to keep us from

spiritual stagnation. In his sermons Fr. Michael untangled muddled meanings and included lessons which were often interjected with humour to make a point. Hardly a sermon was preached without including the reminder, "God loves us as though there were no one else to love". We left with these words anchored in our hearts as sustenance resonating throughout the week even if we didn't always retain other details.

In addition to creating the most comprehensive Sunday bulletin in the Diocese, Fr. Michael also thoughtfully prepared a monthly prayer calendar to serve as a guide to our daily devotions. To give an opportunity for reflective mid-week worship, he introduced weekly Wednesday evening Eucharist services, and faithfully prepared for these services even when attendance was low. During Lent and Advent Fr. Michael offered Tuesday morning Eucharists followed by thought-provoking small-group studies on a variety of topics, using music and video. We are grateful for all the time and effort that went into preparing for and leading these kinds of meaningful activities, which Fr. Michael introduced to help us grow in faith and discipline!

Shortly after his arrival here, a concern and care for the people inside the church convicted Fr. Michael of the need to improve the exterior of the church building. The exterior of the church did not reflect the warm and caring place of worship and community experienced in the interior. Fr. Michael quickly spearheaded improvements such as: impressive and effective signage welcoming all regardless of creed, colour, race, gender, sexual orientation; a cross installed on the west wall; upkeep of the grounds, ensuring the grounds conveyed to the "passer by" the welcoming place of worship, depth of human compassion and love so present inside the building walls.

Fr. Michael also arranged for some richly designed stained glass windows to be installed in the church sanctuary, communicating episodes from the life of Christ. What a stunning addition to our worship space!

Another addition to our church has been the Parish Library, fully stocked with Father Michael's books and organized according to subject. We will always value this and thank you for this wonderful addition to our church community.

Thank you, Fr. Michael, for introducing some very special services, most of which were new to us: A Quiet Afternoon in preparation for Christmas to remind us of the real meaning of Christmas; Blue Christmas, offering comfort to those who find Christmas celebrations difficult or devoid of any compassion; Good Friday services, given a new significance through the action of delivering a flower to the foot of the cross, thus enhancing our understanding of the depth of Christ's love for us.

Now, Fr. Michael, as we bid farewell while you close this chapter of your life and start a new one, may the words you imprinted in our hearts also resonate in yours: "God loves you as though there were no one else to love". With our well wishes goes our love, too, and our prayers for good health and happiness to enjoy a hard-earned,

well-deserved retirement. Your presence on this "hill" has made a difference! May God walk with you in this new journey.

THANK YOU FOR ENRICHING OUR LIVES AND OUR FAITH THROUGH YOUR MINISTRY AMONG US!

-The Churchwardens of the Church of the Transfiguration, on behalf of the congregation

The Best Medicine?

We've all heard the phrase, "Laughter is the Best Medicine," but does laughter really help in relieving not only stress, but also disease?

One of the foremost pioneers in humour therapy was the American writer and tireless advocate for peace, Norman Cousins (1912-1990). In his book entitled *Anatomy of an Illness (as Perceived by the Patient)*, first published in 1979, he recounts his battle with a connective tissue disease, ankylosing spondylitis. While all the specialists' prognoses were poor, Mr. Cousins believed that he could, in fact, "cure himself". He used humour as both a painkiller and a substitute for chemical therapy. He found that watching old Marx Brothers movies evoked genuine belly laughter, which led to at least two hours of pain-free sleep and a significant drop in his sedimentary level. With daily doses of laughter, combined with active participation in his medical treatment, Mr. Cousins made a full recovery. Almost 20 years later, he suffered a massive heart attack. Using the same philosophy of laughter and "partnership" with his physicians, he again made a full recovery. Mr. Cousins, who was editor-in-chief of the *Saturday Review* for more than 35 years, became a member of the faculty of UCLA's School of Medicine in 1978, specializing in the field of biochemistry of emotions.

Even before Norman Cousins went public with his humour theories, Annette Goodheart, Ph.D. had been using laughter therapy in peer counselling since 1970. Dr. Goodheart took Mr. Cousins' theory one step further. While Mr. Cousins knew laughter had extreme healing power, he didn't know why. Since Dr. Goodheart had studied this for years, the humour theory could be better explained and established.

While at first the medical community discounted this premise, research has since conclusively shown that laughter is very powerful medicine. Doctors at Loma Linda University in California conducted a test to study the changes in epinephrine, the natural killer cell activity (NKA), and cortisol levels in response to laughter. In that test, an experimental group viewed a 60-minute humorous video while the control group did not. Blood samples from both groups were taken before, during and after viewing. Both epinephrine levels and cortisol levels decreased in the experimental group and NKA increased in the experimental group. Since increases in both epinephrine and cortisol are immunosuppressive and are linked to stress-related diseases such as ulcers, high blood pressure and coronary heart disease, it only makes sense that a big dose of

laughter to lower these levels can make a person feel better both emotionally and physically.

Other physiological responses to laughter include increased respiration, circulation, hormonal and digestive enzyme secretion, as well as a levelling of the blood pressure. Laughter also promotes the release of endorphins from the brain. Endorphins are nature's own "drug", giving a sense of euphoria.

More recently, or perhaps better known to the general public, the effect of humour on the chronically ill was depicted in the hit 1998 movie, *Patch Adams*, based on the true story of Dr. Hunter Adams, portrayed by Robin Williams, who believed that humour could act as the best medicine. His use of humour is used extensively with cancer patients. He is the founder of "The Gezundheit Institute" which is located in Washington, DC.

Many hospitals are now implementing humour centres and humour intervention in treating patients. In 1987, Duke University developed the "Duke Humour Project" which offers bedside humour therapy to cancer patients. Patients receive humorous interactions through the use of books, audio, video and clown props. Patient assessments have shown that humour works in a variety of ways to help patients, namely, as a distraction to their pain, and as a positive effect on their recovery. Not only is humour used as therapy for sick people, many corporations and institutions are conducting humour workshops for their employees — a happy employee is a more productive employee.

There are countless websites dedicated to humour as therapy. There is also a scientific "name" for the study of humour as treatment — psychoneuroimmunology — as well as a "title" for the practice of humour therapy — "Mirthologist".

There are many reasons to laugh — to cope with a stressful situation, to break the ice at a tense moment, or to make someone feel more comfortable. In sum, we know how important it is to eat healthy, exercise our bodies and our minds and reduce the stressors in our lives, but let's not forget how important it is to laugh. Laughter is the grease that turns the health and wellness wheel!

"Of all the gifts bestowed by nature on human beings, hearty laughter must be close to the top."

-Norman Cousins

The Secret of Longevity?

The strangest man in the parish was the old Colonel who lived near the church. He confessed to the Vicar that he thought the reason for his longevity was that every morning he sprinkled gunpowder on his cornflakes instead of sugar. He was well in his nineties when he died. He left a widow and three sons; and a very large crater where the crematorium used to stand.

Upcoming Services

The Celebrant and Preacher at all services until June 27 will be the Rector, except where stated.

Sunday, May 23	The Day of Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, May 30	Trinity Sunday
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

The Celebrant and Preacher at both services today will be The Reverend Marili Moore.

Sunday, June 6	2nd Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, June 13	3rd Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, June 20	4th Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, June 27	5th Sunday after Pentecost
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

This will be the final service at which The Reverend Canon Michael Burgess will preside and preach before his retirement.

Please note that there will be no 8:30 a.m. celebration today.

Sunday, July 4	6th Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, July 11	7th Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, July 18	8th Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

Sunday, July 25	9th Sunday after Pentecost
8:30 a.m.	Holy Communion (BCP)
10:30 a.m.	Holy Eucharist (modern rite)

From July 4 until further notice the services will be conducted by an interim priest.