

Perfect Picture?

Pentecost

(Sunday, 31 May 2020)





Modern acrylic painting

Here are two contrasting (very different) paintings illustrating events at Pentecost, a time when the Holy Spirit descending to the apostles and followers of Jesus.



Older oil painting from an art gallery in Madrid, Spain.

- How are the paintings similar and how are they different, both in style and content?
- Read the account below:

It seemed as if a very strong wind was blowing. It filled all the house where the disciples were sitting. They saw tongues that seemed like fire. These tongues separated and they came to each disciple. And the tongues stayed on them. The Holy Spirit filled all the disciples. Then, as the Spirit gave them power, they began to speak in different languages.

There were some Jews who were staying in Jerusalem. They were holy men from every nation in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They did not know what was happening. When each person heard the believers, the believers were speaking in his own language. They were very surprised. They tried to understand what was happening. They said, 'These men who are speaking like this are from Galilee! So, when we all hear them, how can they be speaking in our own languages? But we all hear the disciples and they are speaking in our own languages. They are talking about the great things that God has done!'

The visitors did not know what to think about it. They did not understand it. They were saying to each other, 'What does this mean?' But some other people laughed at the believers. They said, 'These people (the believers) have drunk too much sweet wine.' (Acts 2:1-13)

- Is there anything missing from the paintings that you think is important to the story?

- The appearance of a dove is not mentioned in the story, so why do you think one is included in the oil painting?
- Why do you think many in the crowd thought that Jesus' followers had been drinking too much wine?
- Jesus' followers often had a hard time, especially from the ruling powers at the time, telling people about his teaching. How do you think the presence of the Holy Spirit helped them?
- Fire can be a powerful symbol. Sometimes people say they have fire in their heart. What do you think that means? What do you have great enthusiasm for, or a passion for?
- How many languages can you speak? Use online resources to find out how you can say 'God is Good!' in lots of different languages.

Reflection:

With all that happened, it must have been a strange experience for the followers of Jesus who were there when the Holy Spirit descended. But God's presence would have given them all a sense of peace. This is what Christians believe the Holy Spirit can help us with – a feeling of peace when life feels tough as well as when it feels good.

During the current coronavirus crisis, from where or from whom do you get your sense of safety or peace? This is something to be thankful for or maybe to ask for help with if you are finding this a difficult time.