

## Pentecost 2026

During COVID the author and naturalist, among many other talents, Adam Nicholson, had the opportunity to fulfil perhaps a childhood ambition: to build a rock pool of his own. He wanted to see what would happen from scratch, as in a new pond, but this time on the sea shore. He built it for convenience not far from his house on the upper shore opposite the Isle of Mull on the West Coast of Scotland. It began well but didn't last; it was too far up the shore and out of the reach of the tide for too long. It quickly overheated and only a few prawns and periwinkles survived. So he tried a second pool also made of concrete but further down the shore and this too began well attracting lots of anemones, limpets, green crabs and two – spotted Gobies. In a visit in late summer however he was greeted with a pool empty of fish and surrounded by gull droppings:, he had inadvertently turned it into a “ gull restaurant”-everything benefited except the fish trapped in the pool and unable to escape. So he tries a third pool even further down the shore and only uses concrete as a bund on two-thirds of its sides leaving the last side to the rocks already there and the floor and it's seaweeds and fauna just as he finds them. The pool is only visible for a few hours each day and refreshed continually by the daily tides. It proves wonderfully diverse and unpredictable, mirroring the natural flow of life.

We can go many ways with this parable – the law of unintended consequences, the need to persevere, the idea of grace building on nature, the tension between order and chaos, the need for boundaries within which there is freedom to play, all as flow. What a perfect parable then for today's feast and the coming and going of the Holy Spirit: free to act when and where it wills but needing a certain receptivity on our part, a particular type of vessel, in order to flourish, one that is permeable, porous, open to the tides, unashamedly 'natural' once more. That's a deliberately loaded statement: to emphasise that the disciples are not being supplanted as human beings – more spiritual, less bodily – but being made more significantly human in all the trials which that necessarily entails – and this both individually and collectively - a church in which a certain anarchy can have it's say: an apparent confusion to some which makes sense to others. What I have in mind is the discussion taking place on the WCCM website regarding the future of the church and the contributions in particular of Dom Laurence Freeman and Iain Mc Gilchrist – the former looking at it through a contemplative lens and pleading for a less centralised and unpredictable church of small centres of “community, ecumenical, caring, concerned for social justice with regular contemplative practise and non-geographical” to paraphrase, whilst Iain McGilchrist looks at it through the lens of a neuroscientist and pleads for a re- establishing of right hemisphere thinking in which opposites may be allowed to co-incide, and experience has it's say as well as the more rule-bound thinking of the left hemisphere. And what has Brother John got to say on this through the lens of Turvey: take a risk, indeed take lots of risks, build your pool as far down the seashore as you dare, for it's there on the margins where life is at its richest fed by the daily tides of Gods love in ways that none of us could ever have predicted.

And to finish with a wonderful poem by Rumi which invites the gifts of the Holy Spirit to come to us in entirely unexpected ways and people

## The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

Some momentary awareness comes

as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they are a crowd of sorrows

who violently sweep your house

empty of its furniture,

still treat each guest honourably

He may be cleaning you out

For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,

Because each has been sent

As a guide from beyond. (transl. Coleman Banks)

And I would add from within – grace building on all our natures however diverse.

Br John Mayhead

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