



A Celtic cross stands near the gate on the south side of church

It's classic Celtic symbolism. We note the form of the cross, an unbroken circle and inside each arm of the cross is typical Celtic art, a weaving that is one unbroken strand that nevertheless reveals the three. The trinity as well as the cross as the most frequent symbols in Celtic art.

What put me in mind of this intricate weaving, a dance in artistic form, is the passage in John's gospel.

Compared to the other gospels, John writes in a more intricate way, you have to slow down and savour each phrase to get the deeper meanings of what is being said.

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.

It seems to me that the weaving together of a rope into an intricate knot tries to symbolise this really well.

The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

What Jesus is trying to explain and communicate to them is multi-layered and complex and interwoven and you only really begin to understand it after you've experienced it.

I have started cold water swimming with Katherine. Previously my rule was that the water must be in double figures, but I started in the middle of winter with the water at 2.2 degrees.

Before doing any of this you learn about after-drop. You get in the water (briefly in my case) get out, get dry, get dressed but after a little while you can experience an after-drop of temperature – you get colder.

Logically you expect to be warming up, you're dressed and drinking a hot drink...but you can suddenly feel your temperature drop. You understand it much better when you've experienced it.

The disciples understanding of who Jesus was and his relationship with God the Father and the person of the Holy Spirit made more sense after Pentecost.

Their understanding of Jesus motives and actions also made more sense later, but Jesus is doing his best to try and explain.

At various times he speaks of the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send. Jesus uses different descriptions.

Advocate, Comforter, the Spirit of truth. Teacher. Peace bringer.

We are free to ask the Holy Spirit to be to each of us today what we need the most. For some it will be Comfort. For others Peace. For others a rekindling of the burning fire of God's love and energy.

What happened at Pentecost was unexpected because Jesus hadn't tried to describe what it would be like. You might remember at one time he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). I don't think that experience prepared them for the joy of the first Pentecost.

What was taking place was the power and presence of God being given to all people.

At Easter the power of God was displayed in one person, in Jesus. His death and resurrection is the heart of our faith and without it we don't have a faith.

At Pentecost the power of God is displayed in all of Jesus followers.

Over time we have come to understand something of the mystery and nature of God. God is a holy community an eternal living community. Differentiated in person, united in love.

At Pentecost the gift of the Holy Spirit created a new community where beforehand there had been individuals.

After Pentecost much of Jesus teaching begins to make sense.

Jesus talks about leaving them and not leaving them. Of going away but being with them. That the Spirit of Truth will come who they will already know.

Jesus followers began to realise that the gift of the Spirit was the gift of Jesus Spirit. Jesus physically had left them at the ascension, but Jesus was with them by the Spirit.

The Spirit reminded them of Jesus teaching, the Spirit guided them as Jesus had done, the Spirit of God worked in power through all Jesus followers, not just the 12 disciples.

The kingdom of God has come in a new way. A community has formed with the desire to reflect the character of the Trinity, a community of love, compassions, sharing, overflowing to others.

The power Jesus displayed is displayed in and through the new community and as time passed, they were able to make sense of what Jesus had said to them.

John is writing for his followers in a church community. He wants them to understand the journey the disciples went on and that all those who come to believe will go on. We move from not understanding and it seeming complicated and fanciful and strange to making perfect sense ONCE you have experienced it for yourself.

On this Pentecost Sunday I wouldn't want a single person to think they've missed out, or don't know as much as someone else, or haven't experienced as much as others may have done. You are where you are on your spiritual journey, the question is, are you open to what comes next? Are you able to trust God for what comes next?

The Iona Communities symbol is that of a Wild Goose signifying the Holy Spirit...not a dove. The Spirit will go where he will and do whatever reveals Jesus and the Father. We are liberty to ask the Holy Spirit today for our need, for comfort, for peace, for inspiration, for the gifts to serve. What might be best though, is just to receive whatever grace the Spirit brings.

Jesus gave a number of descriptions of the Holy Spirit as I mentioned earlier, I wouldn't presume to tell the Holy Spirit what he should do next, but I want to pick up on one description.

Jesus said - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. Another Advocate suggest there is already an advocate. And there is. Jesus.

Jesus was an Advocate for God the Father. It's clear from reading the Old Testament the Religious leaders misunderstood God. Jesus needed to put right their misunderstanding.

After the Ascension, Jesus is in heaven as our advocate, putting our case and our needs and our situation before the father.

The Holy Spirit has come as Jesus' advocate, reminding of his teaching, leading us into truth, comforting and sustaining the new community drawn together by the same Spirit.

It's a great comfort to me that Jesus speaks up for my need and my cause. He's on my side.

And it's a great comfort that the Spirit continually reveals Jesus and is fully present to me here and now.

On this Pentecost I'm not going to focus on understanding as much as I am on experiencing. To have the desire and the courage for the next step, the grace given in whatever way the Spirit deems fit to lead on and reveal Jesus in me.

And I encourage you for the same. And the wonder of this is – the answer will always be YES.

Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 8 June 2025