

Tuesday Reflection 25th May 2021

So much is going on. Today we celebrate the memory of St Bede, whose *History of the English Church and People* is a key text for understanding the early Christian history of this country. This week we also commemorate the 500th anniversary of the conversion of St Ignatius, the co-founder of the Society of Jesus, and we celebrate the anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si*, to which the bishops on this island devoted their Pentecostal Pastoral Letter. It is to Pentecost that I would like to turn.

As a linguist and sometime teacher of translating and interpreting, I am particularly fascinated by Pentecost Sunday's first reading from *Acts*:

“how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” (Acts 2:8-11)

For me, this demonstrates how the Word of God knows no linguistic boundaries, but can be expressed and heard in its own way in every language and culture, and is not bound to one particular tradition or text.

A good example of what I mean can be seen starting from the second reading on Pentecost Sunday from the Letter to the Galatians about the fruits of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)

There is a striking similarity here with the Cherokee story of the two wolves quoted last Tuesday:

the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all.

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

There is little or no difference between Paul's account of the fruits of the Spirit and the attributes of the Good Wolf, truly a case of God's Word transcending human boundaries and a testimony to the divine unity amidst human diversity.

The great wisdom of Pentecost is the recognition through the Spirit of an underlying unity amidst the many differences!

Michael Townson