

**Pentecost, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

Canongate Kirk.

**Acts 2:1**      *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.*



Having our own Normandy Veterans Association Memorial here in Canongate Kirk, the wonderful set of tapestry cushions that bring a warming spectrum of light and colour to the curved wall of the apse, it would be remiss not to refer today to the poignant commemorations of the Normandy Landings that have taken place in the last few days in Portsmouth and in Bayeux to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the momentous events that unfolded on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944. D-Day. You might be forgiven for thinking that our reading from the Book of Acts had been deliberately chosen to reflect it one way or another: *“Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.... And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.”* In fact those are some of the words of the prophet Joel that are quoted by Peter in explanation of the momentous events of a much earlier day, the day of Pentecost, the mysterious day foreseen centuries before by Joel when God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.* Amongst all the world leaders and senior officers from the Armed Forces of so many nations, it was the veterans who stole the show at the D-Day commemorations, those who were all together in one place, back together after all these years in a place they had once thought they might never see again. And their primary concern was not for themselves but to remember those who did not survive, and to ensure that when the last of these amazing Normandy veterans is no longer here, that remembrance, that memory will live on. Thankfully our colourful memorial will always play its part in that process.

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.* There is a sense in which our reading from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles similarly sets down for the benefit of future generations something of what that first generation saw and experienced, not least on the Day of Pentecost, when they were all together in one place. Peter and the other eleven were

there, we are told, along with devout Jews from every nation under heaven. But sooner or later they would go back to where they had come from, they would no longer be together in one place but back in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Libya, Crete and Rome, and there they would tell the story of what they had seen and heard in Jerusalem on that great and glorious day, the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, the Last Supper that Jesus had shared with his disciples. Sooner or later there would be nobody left who had been there on the day, nobody left who had felt the rush of a violent wind, the heat of a tongue of flame, the sound of their own native language. Last week we marked the Ascension and just before Jesus left them he had commanded them, you remember, to go therefore and make disciples of all nations. And now that's exactly what they would do, armed with the power of the Holy Spirit to bear witness for him in every nation under heaven. They would never again be together in one place but wherever they went and whatever they did in the service of the early Church, they would be bound together by what they had seen and experienced that day. *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.* As are we today. And as we celebrate this great festival of the Church in the Sacrament of Holy Communion at our holy table surrounded by the Normandy Veterans memorial, we do so mindful of all those who have gone before and thankful for the power of the Holy Spirit that binds us together forever. And now may God bless to us this preaching of his most holy word, and to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory now and forever.

Amen.