



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Called to Reconcile

Reflection for Pentecost

24 May 2026

Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Heal our wounds; our strength renew; on our dryness pour thy dew.”

- Holy Spirit, Lord of Light, Sequence, Pentecost Mass

On Saturday last I concelebrated Mass with Bishop Martin Mtumbuka from the Diocese of Karonga in Malawi; the Cathedral was full of Catholic people from Malawi around the Archdiocese. The celebration, full of joy and music, demonstrated that the Holy Spirit, first experienced at Pentecost remains with us. Bishop Martin gave a Homily that roused his people to action: to witness to the Faith they had received from their priests, catechists and families back home. He told them they were needed by the Church community here to strength her in witnessing to Christ and to our Catholic



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Faith: they were not to give way to the temptation to focus only on material things, or be unfaithful to their marriage vows. Several times the congregation clapped the Bishop; something we are not used to in the Western part of the world! It was clear the Bishop, who is Chairman of the Bishops' Conference in Malawi, had come to rouse the Faithful from back home to be missionaries here. This was very much the theme of the Jubilee of Migrants in Rome last October: "Migrants, Missionaries of Hope."

I am happy to point to other migrant communities gathering to seek the strength of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of hope too:

- This Coming Saturday, the Eritrean Community will gather in the St Vincent's, Nechells (formerly Ashted and Vauxhall), to welcome Archbishop Menghesteb Tesfamariam. This Community gathers regularly supported by their priest, Fr Solomon, to celebrate Mass in their own Liturgical Rite and language. Their depth of Faith is evident not only in their Masses, but also in their prayer groups and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This Community plays a huge part in their local parish of St Vincent's, which survives in large part due to them.
- And we are planning now for the visit of Cardinal Chow from Hong Kong in July. The Hong Kong Community here enjoys being able to gather for



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Mass and Confession periodically in their own Cantonese language; they are noted for their presence in many parishes and schools across the Archdiocese. Soon they will have a Permanent Deacon to support them pastorally, who speaks their own language and can assist with adult catechesis for those who find English a challenge. And parishes are finding this younger community a great injection of life – volunteering for some of the regular roles we like to see taken up in every parish.

On Pentecost Sunday a number of parishes now have an Intercultural Mass so recognising the many languages and backgrounds of the people making up their congregations: some of them also share their traditional food and dress in the way they did back home. Truly the experience of the first Pentecost is being replicated in our time. The barriers that once existed are being discarded as we are called to be one in the Holy Spirit. As St Paul says in the second reading: “in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of the one Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:13)

We celebrate this unity of peoples in the Church at Pentecost: in the Gospel the experience of the coming of the Holy Spirit is seen in the words of our Lord who speaks of peace and forgiveness and the mission of the Apostles in



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

this regard. One of the striking things we see in these days is the way the Church is seeking to share that peace and forgiveness with the wider world. I was struck by the approach of Pope Leo in Algeria, a mainly Muslim country, where he encouraged interfaith dialogue preaching a message of fraternity, forgiveness and mutual respect. He was not denying our Catholic Faith; indeed he visited Annaba, ancient Hippo, where St Augustine was Bishop, and there he was welcomed by the local Muslim leadership. It is an encouragement in a very divided world to see the Church being recognised as the body that can draw people together whatever their Faith, to be seen as agents of peace and harmony among peoples, a reconciling presence in situations of conflict.

In my short account of key aspects of the life of St Francis, as experienced on a Jubilee Year Pilgrimage to Assisi recently, I didn't mention his encounter with Islam at the time of the Crusades. Francis sought peaceful conversion, but engaged in respectful theological sharing leaving a lasting legacy of mutual respect. If you google St Francis and Islam, you will find that he instructed his friars to live peacefully among Muslims, which has led to centuries of Franciscan presence in the Holy Land, known as "Custody of the Holy Land."



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

The Sunday Connection Commentary for the Solemnity of Pentecost concludes with these words: “The Gospel reminds us that the Church is called to be a reconciling presence in the world... This reconciling presence is also to be a way of life for Christians. In situations of conflict, we are to be agents of peace and harmony among people.”

I found these words from the Sequence particularly appropriate for our prayer this coming week:

“Heal our wounds, our strength renew; on our dryness pour they dew.”

Amen.