



# **THE NEW SHOFAR**

**Receive the Holy Spirit and live**

**Peace I leave to you, Shalom I leave with you**

## **Pentecost**

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid*

In today's great Feast, the Risen Christ fulfils a promise He had earlier made to His disciples. That promise was the divine gift of *peace*. God's *Shalom* originates at the time of creation. After six days of labour, God rested. Along with Him, everything else came to rest. That is the true Paradise: men, women, creation at one around the One God who created them. Paradise is what is created when human creatures pause to *be-at-one-with* God. *Shalom* is what God creates. Alongside of God is the only place this Peace/Paradise is experienced.

In the Gospel of John, this *Shalom* is a gift of the Resurrection. The disappearing of Christ into Heaven does not mean the end of His ministry on earth. It is transformed, not brought to a close. The mission given to the Son by the Father continues in and through the *Shalom* gifted to the disciples at the Last Supper. It was a gift, not just for the Twelve at the Last Supper with Him. It was a gift from God for the world.

*The stone was rolled away...the door was locked*

We can so easily skip over these two short notes provided for us by John, even though he was not given to adding extra words to his narratives. They are there to highlight a vital insight into our lives as disciples: no mighty stone could stop Jesus from rising, just as no locked door could stop the Risen Christ from reaching His disciples in their time of need. The *stone* and the *door* represent everything standing between ourselves and the Risen Christ. They are all swept aside before the divine will.

Here is the first of our human realities. When there is a perceived absence of Christ in the daily lives of believers, it is so easy to become overwhelmed by what is happening to us or around us. These disciples had allowed present circumstances to strangle the knowledge they had of Jesus, the experiences of the Joy they had when Christ was in their midst.

*As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

Having given them a reassurance of a divine presence in their lives, Jesus now comes to the full glory of Pentecost. He entwines His own ministry with that of the disciples. What the Father had sent Him to do in the world, Christ now shares with them. The model for our discipleship is the life, teaching, preaching and person of Jesus Himself. Be as Christ to all.

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They were to give witness to Christ – make him known to the world – proclaim that God’s gift of salvation may be open to all. There are no limitations to what is demanded of them.

***The Christ breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit”***

For those present, this declaration would have immediately brought to mind the acts of creation. In the Bible’s opening verse, we are told *the Spirit of God was hovering* over the chaos, the darkness and the restless boiling waters of the Deep. Nothing was living. No light shone. But even here in this place where God seems not to be, the God’s Spirit was *hovering*, a verb meaning paused ready to pounce. Then God acted. That is who God is.

Creation happens in the Spirit. This is the same Spirit who is the very essence of our human existence... *God breathed into the man’s nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being*. Not only is the whole of creation alive in the Spirit and creation continues in the Spirit but we humans are alive in the same Spirit. Remove the Spirit from us and we cease to be. The Spirit creates and the Spirit enlivens.

In the Bible, this *breathing* is understood to be the imparting of life as we see in the story of the Dry Bones in Ezekiel... *O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live*. What were dead, dry bones came alive and became a mighty army under God.

Herein lie the roots of today’s Feast. It is about the transformation of these disciples, empowering them to take into their lives God’s Spirit. This is a Spirit who creates, who tears apart those obstacles standing between the individual believer and the Living God. This is why the *stone was rolled away*, and why the *locked door* prove to be inadequate in holding back the mission of God in the world.

***A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you (Ezekiel)***

The New Life given by the Spirit at Pentecost is the life of the Risen Christ. The Jews believed that when the End Time (eschatological) Spirit was poured out, there would be a cleansing of sins for the faithful. Whatever of past limitations and sinfulness, in the Spirit there is the gift of a new life, a new beginning. But this Spirit must be taken up and be given an opening in order to transform the heart and so the life of the believer.

As the Spirit of God breathed into the first Adam *made him a living being*, so too is our present human existence newly defined by the breathed-in-Spirit of the Risen Christ. The Spirit shapes us that we become children of the Resurrection, people who have a purpose in life, a purpose originating in heaven, at God’s right hand. We are important because we live in the Risen Christ, because we are people of Pentecost. We have a responsibility to be living in the world in such a way that others can see the Christ at work in us.

The Church received from Jesus the responsibility of bringing to the world the Good News that sins are forgiven. This is the mission of God in the world, a mission we are invited to share as collaborators. It is not our mission. It is God and God will lead it to success.