

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ (Acts 2:1-4)

Today is Pentecost and it is also the day that we are going to launch the St Marc’s Prayer Pack. Before I go on to explain about the Prayer Pack (PP), I need to ask a question:

Is prayer for Sunday only? Is coming to church on a Sunday, the only requirement for a Christian? The Apostle Paul answers this in this way from 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19:

‘Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit’.

So no, not only on Sundays, but all the time.

This very principle is at the foundation of what goes on in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples in Jerusalem:

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V.1 notes: ‘When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.’ The disciples were gathered together in one place, so what were they doing? There wasn’t one doing the crossword, or another watching television, or another playing with his train-set. No, they were praying together, unaware of what was about to occur in vv.2-4: the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a demonstration of prayer and the demonstration of the power of prayer.

Vv. 5-12 read: ‘Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”’

This is a reaction to the power of prayer demonstrated in vv.1-4. The visiting Jews recognised the prayerful gift given to the disciples for what it was, how else could these men preach so? They were amazed by it.

But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine” (v.13). This reaction is the ‘dismissal of the power of prayer’. While vv.14-18:

‘But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my

Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy' is the confirmation of the power of prayer.

Vv.19-21: 'And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved', underlines both why prayer is necessary and why keeping in touch with the Lord is important.

That is why we are introducing the PP. Pick one up today! It is to give everyone in the St Marc's community a resource to join together as in prayer to the Lord. All I am asking is that everyone spends at least 5 minutes every day in prayer.

That's all! 5 minutes minimum! There are sufficient resources to do more if you wish, but if you only read the basic Morning Prayer Order or the Evening Prayer Order through from start to finish, it will take you 5 minutes. Make a regular time for your 5 minutes (with your first coffee in the morning for instance) if you can, as this makes it easier to plan for, but any spare 5 minutes will do.

Haven't got five minutes in your busy day? Yes, you have! Give an honest answer to this question: How much time do you spend scrolling through your phone a day reading or watching nothing in particular?

OK! Now tell me you can't take a 5 minute break from that. To help you a downloadable version will be available from the website this week, so you can scroll down on the prayer!

Using the Prayer Pack will allow you to feel more in touch with the Lord and he will have the devoted pleasure of your company for at least 5 minutes. What is not to like about that! Amen!