

Pentecost Eve 2019

Compiled by Bjorn and Lilian Schmid, Convenors of Transforming Sydney,
Coordinators of Prayer Strategy for the Spheres of Influence (prayerstrategy.org)

We pray you celebrated Pentecost this year with your brother and sisters, demonstrating the love of Christ for the whole Body, and for all people in the world. Keep doing so every year wherever you are.

Proclaiming Pentecost in Sydney

This year we celebrated Pentecost Eve in the north of Sydney at Chatswood Catholic Church. Fr. Jim McKeon and the parish team gave us a warm welcome, and Jane Chifley led us in praise and worship songs including 'Spirit You Are Welcome Here', glorifying God in the amazing acoustics and ambience of the cathedral.

"It's my great pleasure to say to you: Happy Pentecost! As we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost tonight we are celebrating God's Holy Spirit among us and drawing us together in prayer ... tonight we sharpen our focus on the Holy Spirit as Jesus has revealed the Spirit to us. We come from many suburbs, we come from many churches, and we are enriched by one another's presence tonight aren't we? We're enriched by the many ways we have of prayer." Fr. Jim McKeon welcoming everyone



Lilian Schmid the Convenor of Transforming Sydney gave us a brief update on Proclaiming Pentecost celebrations being held across Australia and the world (including Africa, India and the USA).

Bjorn Schmid, the Co-convenor for Transforming Sydney gave a summary on the purpose of gathering for Pentecost in Sydney. He also outlined the celebration last year at Minto in Sydney's South-West, which is being held again this year, and blessed the prayer leaders in Northern Sydney.

*"We continue to pray to witness the move of the Holy Spirit again across our nation and everywhere. I praise my God for all the people who are running Proclaiming Pentecost in Australia and overseas."
Lilian Schmid—Convenor for TS*

"Heavenly Father we just thank you that you have gifted us with life. We thank You that You've gifted us with everything we have, everything we are, every breath that we breathe Lord. I thank you Father for the glory that you showed Your people in the South-West last year. And Father I just pray that You would now bring that glory into the North side of Sydney Lord. Bless each one of these leaders here and let them shine forth, let them encourage and really communicate to their communities, their prayer communities, just how much love You have, and help to communicate that love to each other and to other communities. And let Your love spread Lord like a wild fire across the North here I pray. Thankyou heavenly Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen."

Bjorn Schmid—Co-convenor of TS

(continued...)



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Pina Bernard from the Office For Evangelisation in the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay on behalf of the Northern region welcomed everyone to the region and lead us in prayer of repentance.

"Our prayer really is for a new resurgence of the Spirit to empower us, to encourage us, to keep us going, and sometimes to prune us; for the Spirit does that too right?"

To prepare ourselves to really receive well the gift of the Spirit tonight ...

I'm going to invite you to join me in a prayer of repentance ...

This week is actually a week of prayer for Christian unity and it concludes this week-end at Pentecost. We do acknowledge the sins against the unity of the Body of Christ and for the times that we have not witnessed to the gospel as well as we could. Have mercy on us Lord and fill us with Your Spirit."

Pina Bernard, Diocese of Broken Bay



After we all sang with deep devotion 'Here I Am to Worship', Rev. Peter Robinson, Chair of Transforming Sydney spoke to us about the challenged being faced by the Body of Christ today to spread the gospel. Then we sang 'Shout to the Lord', and afterwards Ken Kennedy then came and read to us Acts 2:1-13 where the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost.



"The great thing about gathering together on Pentecost Eve is that we keep taking the opportunity not to ignore our prejudices as we come with our different denominational stories or different church styles like charismatic or non-charismatic; all those different ways that people express their faith. But we have an opportunity to acknowledge what we have in Jesus, and in Jesus alone, who alone is our unity. As his servants; to keep reminding us as at the day of Pentecost our calling in the Spirit of God, and experiencing the reality of the new creation.

Everyone in Christ is a new creation, and we are called over and over again to preach Christ. This is happening all over the world against enormous opposition, and those are persecuted who stand with Christ, suffering eighty percent (80%) of all religious persecution around the world. But it is as we focus on Jesus; He is our Lord, He is the head of His church, and that our denominations matter as we carry the story onward."

Rev. Peter Robinson, TS Chair



Ken Kennedy

"And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting 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 2:2-4 RSV]

(continued...)

Bjorn Schmid from Transforming Sydney delivered a talk on the meaning of Pentecost: "Courage of the King".

"... if they don't see the power of God in our lives they're not going to be convinced by our words ... there are incredible orators out there who can tell you all sorts of things, Christian and non-Christian, and they will sound very, very convincing, but in the end; when the boss is yelling at you, when the neighbours have done something which really just makes you want to explode, when you're trying to get into that parking spot and someone is blocking you ... what makes a difference for how we respond ... that difference is Christ through the Holy Spirit living in us. That's the thing, that is the element in us which is different.

I love that verse in Ezekiel 36:26 where it says 'I will take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and blood'. That's one of my favourite verse in the Bible, and that really is the most important thing out of all this is to realise that we are in the world but not of the world as Jesus said. We are re-made, ... the Holy Spirit working in us helps to make us a new creation, so that the next time somebody cuts me off I'm not going to swear, I'm not going to get upset, I'm going to pray for them instead.

I'd like to challenge you with a thought: through the Holy Spirit in a sense we're married to God, do you know that? I mean we're living with Him, He's living with us, we're kind of married to Him aren't we? It's that kind of relationship, similar to marriage where you have two people who meet, they get married and live together after that; they share each other's lives. We're doing the same thing with God in a much more intimate way even than our married partner does. But because we all have the same Holy Spirit we're also kind of married to each other, which means that everything I do impacts on you, and everything that you do impacts on me, and I think that's a very important thing to remember. We are family knitted together in Christ, having Christ's blood in our being.

So how do we cope with all of this? I've laid down a whole bunch of things: we need to be ambassadors of God, we need to be this, we need to be that; how are going to handle all this? How are we going to cope with it? We need the courage of Christ, the courage of Christ to do all these things, and He said He would never leave us or forsake us. That's good but what is the courage of Christ? The courage of Christ is His love. His love for His father, His love for the Holy Spirit, and His love for us. Therefore if you want the courage of Christ, you need to have the love of Christ. You need to have the love of Christ for God, and the love of Christ for each other.

"And that's all I really want to share, I just want you to walk away with that thought. You want the courage of God to proceed, to be Christ in the world, you need His love. You can't do it without His love."

Bjorn Schmid—Co-convenor for TS



After singing 'Blessed be the Lord', Father Jim invited the first group of four prayer leaders up to the front to offer their prayers.

Rev. Ian Weeks (Belrose Uniting Church) prayed for the Australian Church to be a humble and an authentic witness to a transforming Gospel, and for those who have been traumatised by institutional abuse.

David Armstrong (Hornsby Catholic Cathedral) prayed for persecuted Christians.

Ann Powell (St. Swithun's Pymble) prayed for unity in the world church and for inter-church groups, especially the Ku-ring-gai inter-church group.

Reg Wong (St Vincent de Paul Society and Frenchs Forest Catholic Parish) prayed for our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

(continued...)

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After the prayers were completed we broke into small groups to pray into the things that had been raised by the prayer leaders.



"Hear the prayers rising around us to give voice to prayer. Maybe you've never prayed out loud before; let tonight be the night where you do speak out loud in prayer, in the safe and wonderful place where the Holy Spirit is moving amongst us.

Father hear the prayers of your people, Father hear us. We know that you know our needs before we ourselves do but Father hear our prayers as we open our hearts to you tonight." Fr. Jim McKeon

After ten minutes of focussed prayer, we sang 'Light the Fire Again' and then Fr. Jim invited the next group of three prayer leaders to offer up their prayers.

Alan White (Forest Prayer Network) prayed for life in the churches of the Northern Beaches of Sydney.

Bella Blaiklock (New Life Baptist Church Dee Why) prayed for unity in the churches and the graces of the Holy Spirit.

Leon Dsylvia (Epping Carlingford Catholic Parish) prayed for people in the region to encounter Jesus and to come to know Jesus.

When they completed the prayers we again broke into small groups for ten minutes to pray into the topics raised.

We then sang together 'All the People Said Amen' to complete our time of prayer.

Bjorn Schmid came up again to give thanks to our host and MC Fr. Jim, and to the team at Chatswood Catholic Church for welcoming us to their wonderful place of worship. Thanks were also given to Jane for leading us so well in praise and worship, to the organising committee - especially to Pina Bernard and Tania Rimac from the Diocese of Broken Bay for their great support and work behind the scenes - and to the many people across Australia and the world who prayed for our gathering together on Pentecost Eve.

Fr Jim offered a closing prayer and sent us all out with the closing hymn of 'Amazing Grace'. All glory to God - it was a wonderful night!

(Thanks also to Jean-Luc Schmid for the photos.)



Alan White, Bella Blaiklock and Leon Dsylvia



Jane Chifley