

# The power of the Spirit



Lord, as we join together to bring new hope to the lives of those who most need it, may we be filled with your Spirit, so all we do is with love and with your power, that is able to change all things. Amen.

## Finding God in Ordinary Time

### Part I – tell me why I don't like Mondays

by Caroline Hodgson

There's just a month before the holidays start – and doesn't it seem interminable? Four weeks chained to the school desk or workplace, and then – freedom. It's like being let out of prison! But pause to consider just how crazy that is. On average we spend nearly a hundred thousand hours working – why should such a high proportion of a lifetime feel like prison to any honest, hard-working person? Of course we

all love high-days and holidays – when something great happens we compare it to “Christmas and birthday rolled into one”. But it's all too easy to see the between-time as mundane, workaday, nine-to-five – time you while away clock-watching. Because every single second of existence is precious, and the trick is to make even the rainiest Monday morning nothing short of extraordinary.

Over the next weeks we'll do a simple exercise in thinking and praying about the “ordinary” things we do. 😊

Jo Jones *reflects on* Acts 2:1-21 and John 14:8-17 [25-27]

Several years ago, with Christian Aid, I visited women in the north of Uganda, just free from war. They had lived in the bush for months, afraid to return to their homes. They welcomed me with songs of joy, thanking us for not forgetting them. In Bangladesh I met craft workers. Their Muslim leader said they were so grateful for Christian Aid's assistance, as “it came with love, given to us as fellow human beings”. In Bolivia, people's self-esteem had been restored through provision of health centres. Ironically, everywhere I went I was fed, literally and metaphorically. People I met were amazed that people here in the UK would take action for them. This gave them new heart and courage. As we take action for the poorest people, the Spirit moves through the world. That is far more powerful than anything we do on our own.

There is so much need in the world, so much injustice, that it is easy to be overwhelmed. In today's readings Jesus promises us that he has not left us to manage on our own: we will be sent the advocate to be with us for ever. At Pentecost this promise is fulfilled with the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit comes with such power that everyone understands one another. It is with this Spirit we are able to act. 😊

## Birds and animals in the Bible

### The dove

by Caroline Fletcher

Biblical doves may not have been white. Wild doves looked more like pigeons hence Psalm 68's description of their plumage as “silver” and “green gold”. Indeed, the original biblical languages use the same words for both pigeon and dove.

The dove released from Noah's ark returned bearing an olive leaf (Genesis 8:11),

showing that the flood and God's judgement were over. This inspired early Christians to carve doves holding olive branches on tombs, symbolising peace with God.

Pigeons and turtle doves were used in the sacrificial system as sin offerings, mainly by poorer people who could not afford to sacrifice a lamb (Leviticus 5:6-7; 12:6-8). After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph offered this poor person's sacrifice, reflecting their modest circumstances (Luke 2:24). 😊

“When you strip it of everything else, Pentecost stands for power and life. That's what came into the Church when the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost.”

David Wilkerson (1931-2011), *The Cross and the Switchblade*