

Hereford Cathedrals' magnificent Mappa Mundi doesn't locate Babel, whose tower we heard of today, but of course it does put Jerusalem at the very centre of the map- Jerusalem, from which, Christianity spread- as we mark at Pentecost. Maps, as we know, are not objective, but project important images of influence, ownership or dominance- from 'Here be dragons', to disputed political boundaries- Kashmir or Palestine or, of course, Eastern Ukraine. He who draws the map shapes power.

This came home to me again recently as I was re-reading some of the letters which the German Language poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, wrote at the beginning of 20thC. Rilke was a citizen of the

Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was born in Prague but educated not in Czech, but in German the language of intellectual and economic power. Prague, of course, in the 20<sup>th</sup> C has seen, like so much of Eastern Europe, national boundaries ebb and flow with passing powers seeking Lebensraum, room to extend their dominance or economic power, all too often poorly veiled excuses for military expansionism.

What has this got to do with Pentecost?- well, a lot, I think, for Rilke, in one of his 'Letters to a Young Poet', talks about the process of ageing. Having received my first tranche of state pension this week I'm more than conscious of the phenomenon. Rilke likens ageing to inhabiting a room, and as we get older we occupy less and less of that room. Ageing,

he argues, brings with it the contracting of our physical and figurative horizons, with limiting mobility and limiting ability to dream dreams, yet, he argues we must maximise what we can. He states, in a striking phrase, that we must 'accept our shrinking horizons **vastly**, so that even the unprecedented must be possible'. Or as the mystic Julian of Norwich reminds us we must be able to see the whole of creation in a hazelnut.

Pentecost has its roots in farming- none of this nonsense about the church's birthday. It is based in the Festival of Weeks- 50 days (**Pentecost**) after Passover and the biblical feast was a thanksgiving for the first harvest of the year, intimately connected to the land, to a place, a space, as

promised to the Hebrew people, full of milk and honey, rich and fertile. A land in which to live and move, breathe and grow. In a sense of course, that's what the map of creation is, certainly according to Attenborough. The Genesis cartography reminds us that, from the very first, the Spirit moved over formlessness and created order, out of chaos created land and sea, out of darkness light and warmth, the floods and the dry land were boundaried, and the universe we know today came into abundant life. In the biblical narrative, wherever the Spirit is present, we can map the growth of order, justice, stability, compassion and peace-in Hebrew shalom, in Arabic Salaam. Where the Spirit dwells there is freedom, growth and fulfilment, there is true peace.

Pentecost is the opportunity to know and live within that freedom, in that growth and that fulfilment, and in that peace, which is not about material growth, but rather is akin to the fulfilment to be found in Rilke's room, living as vastly as we can in limited space, occupying the space God gives us to grow in and inhabiting our own salvation by ensuring that our growth is never at the expense of our neighbour. In this internal inhabiting of the space God grants us, by living in and with his Spirit, we also allow, no, **more**, we **enable** others to grow too- that's the church's mission. Pentecost, the moving, stirring of the Spirit, does not call us to some competitive religious Lebensraum to occupy space and territory of the body, mind or soul lest

other faith traditions or materialism itself fill the vacuum. No, The Spirit of God calls us rather to live within our experience 'as vastly as we possibly can'- everything of the Spirit-its fruits- are and must be practised and realised within such living- love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness and so on.

We are reminded this Pentecost Day that the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem, where they had been told to wait, until the Spirit clothed them with all that is necessary, to live fulfilled lives- and as Greeks and Romans, Parthians Scythians, Medes and Cretans and all the rest, in the very opposite of Babel, hear in their own languages, so we are also called to live fully clothed with the promises we

received in baptism- that's the language we need.

This Pentecost Day the disciples heard and understood that the map of salvation is not bounded by religious or ethnic purity, but is drawn by the acts of truth and kindness, compassion and mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation- from Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth- even Chelsea, the Donbas, Yemen, Afghanistan or Tigray.

This is the map of God's world- to be experienced and shared by us 'as **vastly** as we possibly can', so that whatever our circumstances, we allow the Spirit to maximise our ability to inhabit every part of God-given life in order that **all** God's children may have fullness of life.

