

CONFIRMATION

Recently I've been on a couple of trips, one for a week to the US, to visit a priest-friend of mine. Whilst there, we went to Kitty Hawk in NC, where the Wright brothers Wilbur and Orville, after years of trying, flew successfully the first aeroplane. There in 1903 on a long, windy beach, they took off on a flight that lasted just 12 seconds. But then the other week I had to go to Rome to a bishops' meeting. I checked in online, but at Heathrow, I couldn't stop thinking how far things have come since 1903: all the planes, the terminals, air traffic control, shops and duty-free. D'you know how many people a year use Heathrow? 75M! The Wright brothers could never have imagined things developing like this. Their invention, aviation, has totally changed the world.

*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak.* From today you too can totally change the world! For it's the day you receive the Holy Spirit. To receive the Sacrament of Confirmation is like getting spiritual wings. For just as the Church, which began as a tiny band of 12 in the Upper Room, yet now has expanded exponentially across the globe with 1.2B members, so too you, if you cooperate with God, will change, grow, develop in ways you can't now imagine. For if you cooperate, the gift of the Holy Spirit will gradually transform you. He'll lift you up. He'll give you 7 new spiritual abilities: 3 for the mind, 4 for the will. He will enable you to see things, know things, do things other people can't see, know or do. He'll unite you with God, the angels and saints, with heaven and the invisible world, with the community of Christ's Church. But better than air traffic control, this Holy Spirit is "in here." He is a Divine Friend living in your heart. He's the Third Person of the Trinity. He'll point out the right route. He'll help you overcome the turbulence of evil. And He'll give you the gift of immortality, the grace to overcome death and safely to arrive one day in heaven.

One of the things I like about flying is being able to travel anywhere you want, with relative ease and comfort. In fact, these days the worst thing about flying is the M25, getting to the airport! But once airborne, it's great to sit back, relax, enjoy a drink, look down on the world. Flying is a remarkable achievement. Our Catholic faith is like that. As you grow in love and friendship with Jesus, you can go higher, faster,

further, reach distant places. Think of this cathedral as the runway to a great adventure! Just as the Apostles took off from the Upper Room to spread the Good News throughout the world, so today the Holy Spirit sends you out as missionaries to tell everyone the Good News about the existence of God, the love of Jesus, the truth of our Catholic Faith. Just as Jesus said *Receive the Holy Spirit*, so now He says to you: *As the Father sent me, so am I sending you*. You are receiving the same Gift given to Apostles in the *sound of a powerful wind from heaven and tongues of fire*. You are receiving the same Gift, the Holy Spirit, not by wind and fire, but by oil and the laying on of hands.

So with this Mass, it's time to begin a great adventure! Jesus invites you to join Him. He sends you out on mission, by the way you think, the things you say and the love you show. There's just one boarding pass you need: your faith, your cooperation, your patience. So I invite you today: Say yes! Join the flight! Open your hearts in welcome! Love Jesus every day in prayer, every week in Mass, every month in Confession! Love Him in the Gospels; love Him in His Church; love Him in the poor. Say yes - and soar high! Life will never be the same again.