Celtic tradition the wild goose is a sign for the Holy Spirit.

A section of an Altar Cloth commissioned for Christ the King, Battyeford
embroidered by Mrs Cath Moore (2019)

**Eighteenth Station: Pentecost**

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in him shall never die. Alleluia.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, 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 Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ Acts 2.1-11

Reflection

During lockdown the geese of York, previously fairly confident, have become even bolder. One has taken up residence at the Railway Station, building its nest there without batting an eyelid. Others roam the streets and seem quite happy to lie down wherever they like.

In Celtic tradition the wild goose was a sign for the Holy Spirit. In contrast to the more usual portrayal of the Holy Spirit as a dove, the image of the goose reminds us that the Spirit not only comforts, but can surprise and disrupt. We don’t always hear words from God in soothing tones, sometimes we are stirred into action by urgency and alarm. The Spirit ‘drove’ Jesus into the wilderness at the start of Lent, and she can drive us to be in places we find uncomfortable.

Alongside the compassion and care which permeates our response to the suffering of Covid-19 there needs to be challenge. In our response to the virus there have been choices, and it may be that these have not always served and protected the vulnerable.

As we hear the daily report of deaths we know that behind the headlines lies an untold number of people bereaved and in sorrow. As we are doing at the Minster each day, we remember all these people in prayer when we light the Paschal candle. In a place which is dear to so many, in all its vastness, a single flame is a token of our prayer. A light, shining in the darkness of our grief.

As the Church we are charged both to support people and challenge the powers in our world whose choices impact on the lives of billions. As we celebrate Pentecost let’s remember that Jesus not only healed but challenged. The image of the wild goose, seen here on an Altar cloth, reminds us of the spirit and tenacity that won’t tolerate the failure of power to care for the vulnerable.

In the image, the goose grasps its neck in a design that speaks to us of God’s completeness - Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. No one escapes this completeness, and we are all called to account. As we remember the wind and flame of Pentecost let’s not make our imagination of the Spirit too cosy. Like the urgency of the goose’s honk, let us be stirred to action - and never tire of seeking justice for all God’s children.

Prayer

We praise you and we bless you, our risen Lord Jesus, King of glory, for you promised that your disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and now we see the fulfilment of your promise. Fill us afresh with your Spirit today, revive your Church, and renew the face of the earth. To you, Lord Jesus, giving to your people the greatest gift of all, be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus: Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life: Lord Jesus, come in glory.

**Music**

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee, to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship thee: the Father everlasting. To thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the Powers there-in.

To thee Cherubin, and Seraphin continually do cry, Holy, Lord of Sabboth; Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy Glory. The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee. The noble Martyrs praise thee. The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee the Father of an infinite Majesty; Thine honourable, trye, and only Son; Also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man: thou didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb. When thou hadst over-come the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God: in the glory of the Father. we believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with thy Saints in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people, and bless thin heritage. Govern them and lift them up for ever. Day by day we magnify thee; And we worship thy Name ever world without end.

Vouch-safe, O Lord, to keep up this day without sin. Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us. Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee. O Lord, in thee have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

William Walton (1902–83) arr Simon Preston and Mark Blatchly