

In the history of humanity, there are quite a few "paradigm shifts" that totally changed the course of history, a proverbial point of no return where what once was, will never be again. In most cases, there was no record of such events, and the general psychological and mental state of people who experienced such shifts in history is forever lost to us.

Firstly there was the agricultural revolution. From hunter gatherers, we are told that we learned or discovered agriculture, thereby changing our behaviour, our physique, our diet, our social dynamics, almost everything. It is easy to think of agriculture as merely a change in the way we get food, but in fact it changed everything. Unfortunately, since this happened so long ago, in a time when homo sapiens were not even into writing, there are no records how the people think about this change.

Secondly there was the industrial revolution. Fortunately this one, we have many writers that have put pen to paper to express their feelings and thoughts on the changes that occurred. Dickens often wrote about the plight of London and Wordsworth wrote of the "dark satanic mills" in which adults and children were subjected to cruel treatment and unhealthy conditions.

On a more recent and much smaller scale there is the story of the watch. The Swiss for many years were the leaders in watch making. They then invented the quartz watch but dismissed it completely as they could not shift themselves away from the thinking that all watches must have a spring. And so as other watch makers grabbed hold of the new technology the Swiss watchmakers were left behind.

We are currently undergoing another major paradigm shift, that of technology. We no longer send letters, we skype twitter, whatzap or snapchat. We can see, hear things immediately around the world. People are growing up with technology in their hands, it is the new norm. We are also more mobile than ever before, travel is cheap, people move around the world quickly and can change the place they call home easily. A major paradigm shift as we interact with different cultures, religions and people. It is reshaping the world in which we live.

People respond differently to these paradigm shifts. Some refuse to engage and like the watch maker are left behind in time. Others will embrace the change and meet the world head on. And some will muddle through just keeping their head above the water as they try to swim against what seems a never ending tide of change.

Often we need these paradigm shifts to knock us out of the way we live, feel or act. Past experiences or just time may have locked us in to a particular way of being or doing. The result can be that we become stagnant.

When I was young my father and my young siblings went across to Browns Island in the Hauraki Gulf in a small outboard dinghy. The sea was flat the sun was out, a perfect day for a trip that I had done before with other friends. Our time there was great as we explored an island of the gulf many are not able to step foot on. When it came to return as we were crossing the Tamaki estuary the wind whipped up, the tide changed and we found ourselves in a very precarious situation as we were stuck in a washing machine of white water with the wind in our face trying to bail out water faster than it was blown in. Consequently with this and other water disasters I have been part of or witnessed you could understand that I was not that confident out at sea. I became stagnant, not willing to experience what the sea had to offer. Because of this I missed many opportunities to experience life, the sea, new things. Then one day Elizabeth and the boys thought it would be a good idea to buy a boat. It was forced to shift my thinking, my whole response to overcome my fears and consciously shift my thoughts, feelings and make change within me; I needed to learn to trust the sea again. Although it was a small paradigm shift that occurred I experienced much more because of it.

There are many experiences in our lives that force us to have paradigm shifts, for good and not so good; the earthquake, the credit crunch, people have moved in completely different directions because of these as we receive shake ups that make us rethink who, what and where we are.

Acts tells us of a powerful paradigm shift in the people of God, of God's 'deeds of power,' the miraculous activities that accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles. We hear of unfamiliar and new experiences like 'divided tongues of fire, fire resting upon them and the speaking of a language that everyone from different regions could understand. The entire book of acts in many ways speaks of the infant church, growing by the paradigm shift brought about by the Holy Spirit.

I can imagine Peter, James, John and the rest sitting there at this time pondering Jesus' death and resurrection but still happy and satisfied to be continuing in the old ways of Judaism, not wanting to move too fast. They needed a shake up to move them forward again. Then in the midst of their comfort comes the sound of a mighty wind, a spirit that shakes them up in ways they could never imagine.

And the great thing is, the disciples move with the spirit, unsure of where it might lead them but always trusting in God they carry on with Jesus' work and as a result begin a great spiritual paradigm shift in the world.

Because of this transformative moment Pentecost is seen as the birthplace of the modern church, the time when the disciples were carried along by the spirit into action, to continue Christ's work in the world.

Many people continue to experience a similar paradigm shift in their lives as they encounter for the first time the risen Christ in their lives. Often this is described as being filled with the Holy Spirit. For many of us who have grown up in the family of God and know nothing else it can be quite difficult to comprehend but I have met and spoken to many people who have had a major transformation after experiencing the Holy Spirit of God for the first time. Like the disciples they are lifted up, blown in new directions and are filled with fire to carry out God's mission.

What can happen is that we become comfortable in our faith, how we express it and what ministries we offer. We can become stagnant in worship, mission and church. It then takes a major paradigm shift to lift us to somewhere new.

The thing though is that we are called sacramentally through our baptism to be filled with the Holy Spirit, for it not to become dormant but kept alive, to keep the fire burning within us, so we may be blown in new directions. These are often places we would prefer not to go but God beckons us forward always.

I believe it is time we moved anew again. So I pray that the mighty shaking wind of the Holy Spirit will come upon us and renew us, that it will blow the cobwebs out of our lives and church and stir us afresh with divine deeds of power so once more we may be filled with the burning fire of God and be reinvigorated for the work of Christ in the world.