That tongue of fire will burn when we live as true friends of Jesus Christ. And when it burns, others will be attracted to its warmth and beauty. Their desire for friendship with Christ will catch fire and become a pilot light to guide their way through this earthly life and into the heart of their merciful Father.

If our activities, worship, and energies are to have any real purpose then they must answer one question: Is what we are doing helping to bring people to a deep and mature friendship with Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God? If the answer is “no” then the tongue of fire will dim and our sense of mission will weaken. But when we each answer “yes” then our friendship with Christ burns brightly and offers a compelling witness to others.

If any of this has struck a chord with you, then join us on Tuesday 25th January at 7.00 p.m. in the Cathedral.

This will be an opportunity for us to think about practical ways that we can deepen the missionary character of our parish family and our friendship with Jesus Christ.

In the coming weeks, you will be offered opportunities to play your part in the mission of the parish by contributing more fully and generously to the life of your spiritual family. In this way, you will allow your tongue of fire to be seen. You will become an icon of the Holy Spirit for others.

Fr Martin Boland
1st January 2022 … Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

“The Church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission...It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats...What is required is conforming, renewing and revitalising the newness of the Gospel...out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries...”

Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007
The Covid pandemic has forced all of us to re-evaluate the priorities in our lives, the ways we work and how we engage with others. This is also true for the Cathedral parish community. This time has drawn into sharper relief the serious challenges we face as believers in a secular society. For example, the challenges of proclaiming the truths of the Creed as universal or upholding Biblical morality as the way for human flourishing. Holding such beliefs is often met with incomprehension or rejection by a society that considers “truth” as just one opinion among many others and morality as something malleable that we shape to satisfy our own immediate needs and desires.

At the same time, our parish community has significantly reduced in size and a number of those committed to its mission are ageing or have gone to their eternal reward. Also of continuing concern are the financial resources needed for the day to day running, work and mission of the parish.

Given these circumstances, the maintenance of tired structures, the acceptance of a lukewarm Catholicism that is embarrassed to speak its name in public or inward-looking parochial attitudes can only lead to a protracted death. Pulling up the drawbridges and becoming a community whose main activity is the celebration of the funerals of its members is an option but one that is contrary to Christ's command to “go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news.”

In God's providence, we have been given this time for a revitalised mission and to live more fully in the Spirit; to allow our faith to be ignited by the tongue of fire. “Only when we do not fear the tongue of fire and the storm it brings with it does the Church become the icon of the Holy Spirit,” wrote Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, “And only then does she open the world to the light of God.”

In our own society, many people have closed the shutters on this divine light. They prefer to dwell as spiritual insomniacs in the blue glow of their mobile phones and tablets that, over time, deadens any meaningful response to life and drains them of hope. The tragedy of our age is not that so many people are afraid of the darkness but that they have grown afraid of the light.

But those of us touched by that tongue of fire have been given a mission: to proclaim to others that Jesus Christ is “the true light that enlightens all people...and that life was the light of all people, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.”

Only when humanity lives in the light of Christ do we see our truest identity as men and women created in the image and likeness of the Blessed Trinity and that our destiny is to share eternally in his divine life. Here lies our greatness and dignity. This is the promise of future glory.

Living in the light of Christ allows us to live with a new clarity and to recognise that when we stock the Foodbank shelves, give a glass of the living water to all those with tormenting thirsts, clothe those we find shivering and afraid, and offer liberation to those who find themselves prisoners of their addictions, then, Christ's light breaks into our world.

That tongue of fire will be seen when we preach the Gospel with the integrity of our lives; when the Word of God and the sacramental mysteries we celebrate restore us to the fullness of the life of grace; and when we love the weakest and poorest in our society and world.