The idea of receiving some divine power is definitely appealing. You will know how anti-Brexit I was when we arrived. After so much work, writing, thinking, statistics, truth-telling – it made little or no difference. Adrian Low is powerless. When I see the 10 year old child in Gaza asking why all this bombing is happening, and all she wants to be is a doctor – in perfect English – I know what I would do with some divine power.

The disciples must have been on the edge of their seats waiting for something to happen. Jesus said it would and they would get ‘the power’. It could be used locally – to heal the sick, or nationally, to give justice to the poor, or internationally, to get the Romans out. If they had ‘the power’ it could be wielded to zap the conspirators and, ultimately, put them in charge. Wouldn’t that be best?

I’ve been watching and reading The Handmaid’s tale by Margaret Atwood. It is a harrowing fictional account of the move of the USA to a so called Christian fundamentalist right-wing nation. The male commanders suddenly insist on a totalitarian religious society weilding power over others, and the power corrupts them, absolutely so that the ethos of Christian living is lost in the horror of abuse.

So it looks as though the power that came from on high did not include the ability to zap the evil ones. By 60AD Rome was still in charge, the Temple was destroyed, the nation was sacked. Chrstians were thrown to the lions. So much for power, so much for asking in my name and you will receive.

But if you look more closely at the nature of the Holy Spirit, the tongues of flame are not a conflagration with hair on fire but a burning candle in the heart.

In Luke’s account in Acts, the Holy Spirit enables the twelve disciples to communicate with others from fifteen different locations. The key was that they all understood. It was a direct counter to the story of the tower of Babel – where humans were getting too big for their boots, building too high – God sent different languages. Something like a Just So story – how the elephant got its trunk. But more than that, the language issue is a big one – only this week do we Brits find ourselves creating trade arrangements with Australia, 12,000 miles away, having turned down free trade and free borders with Spain. Languages can set people apart or bring them together. The power from on high was, even at that stage, the power to communicate the gospel across the cultures, languages, races and borders created by humans.

Look at Paul’s description of the Spirit of God. Gifts and fruits, as he calls them: Love Joy Peace Patience Kindness Goodness Gentleness Faithfulness Self-control. The word zap does not appear, nor, actually, does the word power appear in our lectionary.

So the Holy Spirit is something which those who have a lust for power, don’t really want. If you start being loving, seeking peace, being gentle and self-controlled, you are not going have the grit to be launching rockets at Tel Aviv or bombing Gaza. It is a new power, a change in people, change of nation power. It is a power to counter the tyrants who would divide society, support racism, sexism and all the other isms, and it is a power which welcomes the refugee as an equally loved member of society, giving justice to the broken.

Asking in my name works. The key in the title. Ask in my name. It’s why we say in the name of Jesus at the end of the prayers of intercession. What we ask is what Jesus would ask. The power we claim is the power of love which overcomes, over time, all other powers in the world. Amen