



Call to worship – John 14: 15 – 17

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

Hymn StF 372

Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthy passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path
illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with
loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes their dwelling.

Bianco da Siena

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Spirit of God,
flickering over our heads,
illuminating our faces,
inspiring our thoughts,
give us now, we pray, words of joy and
praise.

Spirit of God,
filling our hearts with hope,
steadying our nerves with peace,
comforting our lives with love,
give us now, we pray, words of joy and
praise.

Spirit of God,
come to us now –
surging through the darkness of our lives,
sweeping over our weariness –
so that, in this time of Pentecost,
the sparkling light of faith,
the rushing wind of hope
and the joyful sound of praise
may echo round the world,
may echo in the church,
and find their response in us.
Spirit of God, give us now, we pray,
words of joy and praise. Amen.

There will be dreams and visions – but we are stuck in our ways, for we have stopped dreaming.
Forgive us Lord.

The believers were together – but we are so divided. Forgive us Lord.

There were sounds of wind and sight of fire – but we expect nothing to change, nothing new to
happen. Forgive us Lord.

They spoke with new freedom – but we are so tongue-tied, too dumb to speak for you. Forgive us
Lord.

Everyone heard the message – but we try to reach only the nearest few. Forgive us Lord.

God will send another helper – but we are so self-sufficient, relying on our own resources. Forgive
us Lord.

The helper will teach you everything – but we have stopped wanting to learn or grow. Forgive us
Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer – please pray whichever version in whatever language you prefer

Reading – Acts 2: 1 – 21

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.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Hymn StF 392

O Holy Spirit, Lord of grace,
eternal fount of love,
in flame, we pray, our inmost hearts
with fire from heaven above.

As you unite in holy bond
the Father and the Son,
so fill us all with mutual love,
and make our hearts as one.

All glory to the Father be,
the Spirit and the Son,
all glory to the One in Three,
whole endless ages run.

Charles Coffin

Reflection

On the day of Pentecost... our reading today gives us the familiar words, the familiar story. It is the antithesis of the Tower of Babel in Genesis when the world splits into individual languages, confusion reigns and people divide. The Holy Spirit arrives to be a common factor, to bring the faithful together, to mend what separates them (us?). We know this history, as the Jews did, God's Spirit is there in Genesis, at creation, when there was only chaos and darkness, and God's Spirit moves across the face of the deep waters.

Throughout our Old Testament and within the Gospels, Acts and the rest of the New Testament the Holy Spirit is referred to, and called upon, in so many ways. In Isaiah alone the Holy Spirit is given as the Spirit of the Lord, of wisdom, of understanding of counsel, of might, of knowledge, of fear of the Lord. Other names are Spirit of life, of truth, of glory, of adoption, of judgement, of grace, of prophecy. And yet this still doesn't cover it. We call the Holy Spirit advocate, counsellor, helper, companion, breath of God, sacred, love divine, comforter (from our hymns today) and yet that still isn't enough. We portray the Holy Spirit as fire, wind, light, cloud, a dove, water, anointing oil, a hand, or a finger.

The Hebrew words phonetically are 'ruach ha-kodesh' which translates as Breath or Spirit, of God, that is Holy or Sacred and is usually a feminine word giving the spirit a mothering nature, the divine feminine; the Greek word is 'paraclete' which gives us advocate or helper, alongside 'pneuma' again breath or spirit, another feminine word. So some people like to think of the Holy Spirit as a female part of the Trinity alongside God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, giving a more rounded, fully inclusive nature of God.

But whatever words you use to describe the Spirit, or however you think of it/her/him/they, what does having the Spirit of God mean to you? How do we experience the Spirit today? Is God's Spirit your consciousness, your courage, your comfort, your compassion?

I believe that God's Spirit is in each of us, from our beginnings, recognised at our baptism, and is a constant companion throughout our lives, being the last thing to leave us at our death. God's Spirit, because it is God given, as to the apostles all those years ago, and we can hold it within ourselves until we are ready to release it into the world through our words and actions. It is a force for good, a moving, restless, energy, that propels us forward and recognises itself in others, likeminded souls, who seek to bring justice, peace and love to the present day in all places, for all people.

You may have different ideas to me, and you will certainly have different experiences, but I hope today you will pause, re-read the story of Pentecost, and seek the Holy Spirit in your life, considering what you may need, what help you search for, and also where you may send your Spirit, and with whom you may share, so that we all see more of God's Spirit, and all that it means, in the world. Amen.

Hymn StF 393

She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
she sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,
lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;
she nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,
nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.

She dances in fire, startling her spectators,
waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;
she weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
nor can she be captured, silenced, or restrained.

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,
gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;
and she is the key to opening the scriptures,
enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

John Bell and Graham Maule

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your filling the world with joyful possibility, catching us delightfully off guard and opening up new opportunities.

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your unpredictability, giving above and beyond our imagination, our dreams.

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your weaving into our lives change and risk to do and be more than we thought possible.

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your comfort, wrapping in love those who need you.

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your YES to life and life in abundance, with no exceptions, no exclusions.

Holy Spirit of God, we give thanks for your coming at Pentecost and again and again into our lives. Amen.

Spirit of fire, inflame in us a passion for justice and equality: that we may know the cleansing of our prejudices and fears and proclaim your freedom boldly, caressing your earth with humility.

Spirit of compassion, infuse us with your longings for wholeness and happiness: that we may reach out to those who are hurting and disordered, enfolding one another with your love and tenderness.

Spirit of wisdom, be within us in our journeying, gently guiding us along right paths: that we may be led towards transformation and new beginnings in our world.

Spirit of gentleness, touch us anew, releasing in us all that we are afraid of: that we may know your acceptance of us, and freely accept and embrace others.

Spirit of power, hold us in our powerlessness: that we may know your strength and become a voice for the voiceless, healing for the wounded and empowerment for the weak.

Spirit of judgement, be tender with us and show us your mercy: that we may humbly learn of you and not be afraid of your prophets in the world.

Spirit of comfort, draw near to us in all grief, confusion and pain; in your graciousness, bring hope, consolation and renewal: that many may look up and discover you in the midst.

Spirit of dance, be our joy: that we may leap and laugh and enter your joy.

Give us confidence in life and assurance in death. Amen.

Hymn StF 370

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breath on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
till I am wholly thine,
until this earthy part of me
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch

Blessing

May the Spirit of the living God bless us and keep in the fellowship with Jesus Christ our Saviour and Guide. Amen.

