

# Listen to the Spirit!

On Thursdays evenings, there is a meditation Mass in the small upstairs chapel in the Parish centre. We begin with a short exercise to help us prepare to meditate and then we begin the Mass and listen to the Readings. After this, we pause for a while and I invite those present to share what they heard in the readings – this does not mean to ‘explain’ the Scriptures, but to share the words each noticed or the thoughts or feelings that came while we listened. Those, who have been coming to this Mass for some time are becoming more and more able to enter into this sharing, but new-comers usually find this quite threatening. This may be due to shyness, but I suspect it is because we get fixed in the idea that if we want to find God then we have to look outwards, to find him in ritual, teachings and explanations – so, if I have not been taught something, then I have nothing to say about it and, thus, our newcomers usually remain silent. It is true that God comes among us in Christ and it is in watching him, listening to him and letting ourselves be touched by him that we are brought into truth. However, there is a whole other dimension of being a Christian, which is missing in this picture

I remember meeting someone, a few years ago, while on my way back home from the lunchtime Mass at Reading University, and she asked me to pray for her, because her *viva* (the oral part of her finals) had gone badly. She said that, when she came out of the exam, she had just cried and cried. I listened to her and found myself saying, “Give those tears to Christ, for tears are like the rain. The Lord never lets them fall without giving life to something and causing something new and beautiful to grow up”. She seemed to find that very helpful, but as I walked away, I wondered, where that thought had come from. I don’t think I had ever said anything quite like that before.

I have changed my prayer on waking recently; I used to offer the day to the Lord, but now I say, “Wherever you are going today, Lord, take my hand and bring me with you”. I believe the Lord was walking down that path, when we met the girl and that he spoke to her through me and with me. Those words were truly his, but they also became mine, when I gave myself, so he could reach out to her through me. God comes to me in sights and words and touch, but he also goes out to others through me in sights and words and touch, and, by so doing, draws me into his compassionate love - and I am changed. Christianity is mysticism and this is the work of the Spirit, whose coming we celebrate at Pentecost.

St. Irenaeus said that while we live we are being created, moulded by “the two hands of the Father” – the Son and the Spirit, Christ from without and the Spirit from within. However, we tend to overlook the work of the Spirit and so forget, or maybe never realised, that Christianity is radically dualistic. We are tempted to think of the Church in terms of outward, physical things: rituals, doctrines, organisations etc, but each one of these outward, external, touchable signs has an inward, internal, spiritual twin. Ritual reveals the love of God at work in our world, but also points to that same love taking root in my life and through me in my community. Doctrine points to what God is ‘at’ in us and in our world, but is also our best effort to plot the path along which the Spirit is leading us. Church organisation is our attempt to put in place a structure to hold us together, but it also points to the inner reality of our being brought into the family of God – a far deeper, far more complex and wonderful

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reality, where all have their unique place and task, in the coming-to-be of the family of God – the Heavenly Church. Maybe, this is why the Coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is described in terms of “Wind”, which you cannot see and “Fire” which you cannot touch – but are, nevertheless, the power to change things, to renew the world.

Recently, one member of our community here got himself into a great deal of trouble and it fell to one man to do most of the work to get him out of his difficulties. He got very little support in his efforts and said to me, justifiably, that he was disappointed with the Church- “why had it not come to that person’s aid?” When the task was almost accomplished, he spoke again about this and I found myself saying to him, “But the Church did come to his aid. For you are the Church” He looked at me and smiled, “Of course!” he said. He also, had looked at things only in terms of the external and not how the reality of being family in the Church had been taken shape in him through the power of the Spirit.

To profess, as we do each Sunday, that we believe in the Holy Spirit, is only one side of the coin. I have to dare to believe that the Spirit is drawing me into life; dare to believe that the love of God is asking to act through me and so take root in me. When I read or listen to the Scriptures, there will be things especially for me, but the Spirit’s journey never ends with me – the Spirit moves through me, drawing me out into the world. When I dare to take the Lord’s hand and share with others the things I notice, I allow the Spirit to renew the face of the earth with and through me.

## Diary

Well, I moved into my new home two weeks ago. The builder told me that I could move in on the Monday, but when I arrived with all my goods on Monday afternoon, the workers were still here. They told me that they were waiting for their pay, but, as it was getting late, I asked them where they were going to sleep that night and they answered, “Here!” I answered, “Oh no! I was told you would all be gone and that is why I came.” However, as I started to unpack, I began to realise I could not begin my life in my new home by throwing seven guys out on to the street. So, when the foreman came to give them their wages, I told them they could sleep the night there and take the bus for home the next day. I, then, went upstairs again to carry on unpacking, but, when I came down again, they had gone. I hoped that was not because of my hasty words and said a prayer that they would find lodgings for the night.

We held the house-warming and blessing the following Saturday and about 30 people from the Church came and provided all the food and drink - it was a lovely evening. However, I had been feeling a bit feverish before the blessing and when everyone went home I began to ache all over and have bouts of sweating. The next day, Sunday, I had to change my clothes about five times because of the sweating, but managed to get through the Sunday evening Mass and spent the next day in bed. I discovered that I had dengue fever, and although the blood test showed it to be only a mild attack, I feel quite weak and washed out.

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So, I am in the house and the workers have gone, but, day by day, I find myself wishing they were back again, as I discover gremlins in the house. For instance, I decided to have a bath last night, only to discover the water pressure was so low it would be hours before it would be filled – that is if I did not have a leak in the drainage plug, which let the water escape as fast, or as slowly, as it came in!

One of the two lads, who needed a new beginning, has been launched on his project, thanks to the help you sent for him. His idea of a small food-stall did not work out, but he has begun a mushroom growing project, which a friend of mine says can be made into a viable small business. That should keep him off the beach. The other lad is looking for premises for his laundry as the original one was let to someone else. However, I have good hopes that we will get him set up as well and so provide a safeguard that he does not go back to prison.

**God Bless and Happy Pentecost!**

**Terry**