

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit

Day One



Before a journey begins it is always good to have done some preparation. Where are we going? How will we get there? Who will we meet? The ultimate destination of our 'virtual' pilgrimage over these next few days is to come ever closer to the heart of God. The map we will be using is not a piece of paper with lines and squiggles or a GPS screen with a soul-less voice saying '*Turn left; In another 100yards you will have reached your destination*'. No. Our map will be following the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that reveal something about God's mission for us. It is this same Holy Spirit who will be our companion on the road.

'Are we there yet?' This is a familiar question that most parents and grandparents have heard, as well as the timeless comment, *'How much longer?'* Our prayer journey with the Holy Spirit will take nine days. The Latin word for the number 9 is '**Novem**'. Hence in the days of ancient Rome the Ninth Month was *November*. In the context of the Church, the term Novena is used to denote a nine day period of prayer, asking God for a particular spiritual favour and petitioning His help, if it is His will. Our Novena is asking God to help us, as disciples, during this global pandemic. We are imploring the Lord for the courage and strength to witness to Him, as a parish family which is part of the One Church, in the unpredictable near future – whatever that may look like!

Our preparation for the pilgrimage is almost complete. We know how long it will take, we know our intention is to pray for the faith and witness of our parish family and so all that is left to do is welcome our companion on the road, the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not a '*what*' but a '*who*'. He is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity and as Catholics we have all encountered him. He is our constant companion in life, though we may not be always fully aware of his presence.



The early Church Father, St. Irenaeus, explained that without the Holy Spirit we could not begin to truly know who Jesus is.

'...It is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit.' (St. Irenaeus)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further unpacks and clarifies St. Irenaeus' teaching:

'This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: to be in touch with Christ, we first must have been touched by the Holy Spirit.' (CCC #683)

Let's just pause and think about that comment. ***'...To be in touch with Christ, we first must have been touched by the Holy Spirit.'*** If you believe in Jesus, no matter how strong or weak you think your faith is; if you recognise Christ as the Son of God no matter how illogical it may seem; if you daily struggle to know, love and serve the Lord and find him difficult to follow yet still deep down within you believe in him, then brothers and sisters rejoice because you are blessed! You are blessed because you are in the presence of the Holy Spirit at this very moment! The Spirit has indeed blessed and touched you. That belief in Jesus, that trust, that recognition, that deep down conviction no matter how unsure or fragile in Our Lord it may be, has only come about because of the power of the Holy Spirit.

You already know our travelling companion on this novena pilgrimage, let's now continue to deepen and foster our relationship with him further.

The itinerary for each day of our journey will be:

- A reflection on one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- The recitation of the words from the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*.
- And finally the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

We are now ready to set off on our pilgrimage. Let us begin with praying the *Veni Creator Spiritus*. This is an ancient hymn that is sung at Pentecost, Ordinations and other important moments in the life of the Church where the Spirit is called upon to help, assist, inspire, encourage and strengthen.

Veni Creator Spiritus

*Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.*

*You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!*

*You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!*

*O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.*

*Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.*

*Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.*

*All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.
Amen.*

Finally in a few moments of silence let us listen. How is God calling me to live out my faith each and everyday? What are the changes I need to make in how I think, act and speak? What are the strengths and gifts I need to build upon and share? What is God asking of me for the future? No matter how strong or weak my faith in Jesus is, I still possess it because of the Holy Spirit. Let us thank the Holy Spirit for this blessing of faith.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue our journey to Pentecost tomorrow.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Two: Sunday 24th May 2020



‘So that she can fulfil her mission, the Holy Spirit bestows upon [the Church] varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her. Henceforward the Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth the seed and the beginning of the kingdom.’ (CCC #768.)

The above quote from the Catechism reminds us of our vocation to be disciples. We are part of the Church, founded by Him on the rock of Peter, and from the moment we are baptised we become part of His Church. Our vocation in the Church is to witness to the power and glory of God in Jesus Christ. All our thoughts, words and actions should daily reveal to the world around us the love of God. We are not alone in this endeavour but have fellow brothers and sisters who are on the same journey. Every person, every family, every parish, every deanery, every diocese are all part of the One Church, praying, edifying and contributing to its witness, mission and prayer everyday. Through the work and life of each faithful member, the visible Church becomes the sign of God’s presence in the world. A sign of Faith, Hope and Charity.

The Holy Spirit, as the Catechism teaches, bestows gifts on the Church to help her in this mission. In our ‘virtual’ Novena we are going to look particularly at the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These Gifts, if we are open to them, allow us to live more virtuous and holy lives which of course leads to embracing God’s will and building up His Kingdom, here on earth.

The Gift of Wisdom

Today, let us reflect on the Gift of Wisdom with King Solomon from the Old Testament.



After his father, King David, had died the crown passed to Solomon. The new King recognised that the crown came with responsibility. The ornate, jewel encrusted band of gold, was a symbol of God's anointed one and it was the duty of this anointed one to serve God and lead His people. Many in the past had failed but now it was Solomon's time. His first action as king was not to count his new wealth or organise a triumphant coronation but to turn to God and pray.

'Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its number cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?' (1 Kings 3: 7-9)

Solomon's prayer is simply for wisdom, the wisdom to see and discern things through God's eyes. Human wisdom is imperfect and can lead to confusion and misunderstanding, just look at the history of humanity. God's wisdom is perfect and eternal.

It is through the Holy Spirit's gift of Wisdom, that we are able to see things from God's viewpoint. In the various challenges of life, the gift of wisdom allows us to respond to the ups and downs of daily living in the way of God rather than in the way of 'I' and 'Me'. Maybe an image we can use to illustrate the Spirit's gift of wisdom is to picture a married couple. The couple have an argument about something and nothing and imperfect human wisdom says:

'Show him how angry he has made you, give him the silent treatment and he can make his own tea tonight!'; 'Let her know with a scowl and a grunt that her actions have displeased you, she'll soon get the message!'

The gift of Wisdom, of looking at the situation through the eyes of God says:

'Why make a big show of my anger, it won't help the situation but make it worse. Isn't it better to come to some type of truce. I do love him at the end of the day.'; 'I was in the wrong. My anger clouded my judgment and I need to make peace and say sorry. I do love her, that's why I married her.'



If we all co-operated with the Holy Spirit and used this gift of wisdom wouldn't there be a lot less tension and anger because of poor communication?

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

*O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.*

*Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.*

*Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.*

*All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.
Amen.*

In today's few moments of silence let us, like wise King Solomon, turn to God in prayer. Let us pray that we may have the courage to use the gift of wisdom more frequently. It is easy to speak and act first and then think later, it is very human. God's wisdom asks us to pause, to discern and then to respond. The results from using this divine wisdom are always more beneficial for everyone concerned. How else can we increase our wisdom of God? How can we see things more clearly from His viewpoint rather than our own? Do we need to pick up the Bible more and read it? When was the last time we picked up a decent spiritual book that helped explain and reveal more about our Catholic Faith? Do we need to sacrifice some time each day for more quality prayer? As we reflect on these thoughts let us be wise enough to put them into action and grow closer to God and become better disciples.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue our Novena journey tomorrow.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Three: Monday 25th May 2020



The Gift of Understanding

'We teach what scripture calls: the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him. These are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even the depths of God.'
(1Cor 2:9-10)

On today's Novena journey we will be reflecting on the Holy Spirit's Gift of Understanding. Yesterday's gift of Wisdom allowed us to respond to situations from God's viewpoint, today's gift of understanding helps us to comprehend the things that are of God. Saint Paul, in the above quote, is writing to the early Christian community at Corinth. He is reminding them that there are some things beyond the intellectual grasp of man's mind. It is only through the gift of the Spirit that we can truly understand them.

A wonderful example of this is found in Luke's Gospel. A few weeks ago, we had the account of the two disciples travelling along the road to Emmaus where they met the Risen Jesus, though they failed to recognise immediately.

Their minds had been darkened with the dramatic and turbulent days of Holy Week. Jesus their master and teacher had been arrested, crucified and buried. The one they hoped in appears to have let them down; and now there are the reports that his body is missing. Their heads are bewildered and their minds fuzzy. However, the stranger on the road sets them straight:

'You foolish, men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself...Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him...'
(Lk 24:25 -28; 30)

What a wonderful line from St. Luke, '***And their eyes were opened...***'. This is the effect of the Holy Spirit's gift of understanding. Our minds begin to open fully to understanding the things that pertain to God.

A personal example that comes to mind when I saw the Spirit's gift of understanding bearing fruit was at Lourdes over twenty years ago. During a summer term at university I went on pilgrimage to the shrine as a helper. I was appointed to accompany an elderly lady from her hotel to the Stations of the Cross where the bishop was to lead the pilgrims in prayer.



As a theology student at the time I knew the concept, symbolism and religious meaning behind the prayer of the Stations. I'd gone through the motions of this devotion numerous times growing up, however, on this particular day God spoke to me through the witness of the old lady I was accompanying.

She would have modestly said that she went to the 'University of Fish & Chips' because everything she knew and learnt in life, she read from the newspapers that her Friday night chippy tea was wrapped in. She knew a lot more than what she claimed. It was during the Stations of the Cross that I noticed her crying quietly to herself and I asked was she okay or should I take her back to the hotel. Her response was immediate: '*Why are they hurting him? What has he ever done to us? Oh, we are bad and yet he still loves us!*' I can still picture her now, the theologian from Rochdale, who understood a lot more than me. I was observing the Stations she was living and praying the Stations. I noticed the statue of Jesus from a distance carrying his cross, she was walking next to him and noticed every scratch, bruise and drop of blood that came off his broken body.

My undergraduate theology course involved three years of formal study which resulted in being awarded a B.Theol (Hons). My elderly companion had been studying, praying and serving the Lord for over 75 years of her life. The result was something better than a certificate or some initials after your name. The award she received was the peace and understanding of who Jesus Christ the Son of God truly is. I still receive prayer cards and affectionate letters from my theologian in Rochdale every year and I know that she is still studying with her prayers, Bible, religious books and rosary daily.

The Holy Spirit's Gift of Understanding allows us the wonderful grace to see beyond the superficial and delve into the depths of comprehending the truths of God and His mysterious ways.

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

***Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.***

***All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.***

Amen.

In the silence of our Novena prayer today, let us ask the Spirit for the grace to nurture the gift of Understanding. The Catholic writer and speaker Mark Shea wrote:

‘The gift of Understanding comes to our brains the same way the gift of strength comes to our muscles — by exercise. Today, ask for understanding and then roll up your sleeves and crack the books.’

Mark is not saying that through our own effort we can achieve the gift of Understanding but that we need to appreciate and foster it so that it can bear fruit in our life. When a child is given a puppy or kitten at Christmas, they do not neglect it because the poor creature will die. Instead they love it and care for it and watch it grow and it brings great pleasure and comfort. The same with the Spirit’s gift of Understanding. We cannot not be a passive participant in the relationship but must co-operate with the Spirit so that, like my companion in Lourdes, we too will see beyond the surface and grasp the truth of God.

How do we take care of the Holy Spirit's gift of Understanding? What are we reading? When are we praying? What are we watching? Who are we listening to?

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue on day four of our Novena pilgrimage tomorrow.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Four: Tuesday 26th May 2020



The Gift of Counsel

The Gift of Counsel, bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit, allows us to make the right decisions in life. Decisions and judgements that lead us to be more faithful to Jesus Christ our Lord.

***'I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.'* (Psalm 15:7-8)**

The Psalmist, in the above quote, gives us this wonderful image of a person who at night is still being shaped and moulded by God. It is at night that we usually sleep. Our bodies finally rest at the end of the day and we cease all movement and thought, we become inactive. However, as the Psalmist expresses, though we may be inactive at night the Holy Spirit is very much active, working within our hearts to guide us, direct us and inspire us to choose the right ways and make the good decisions. It is these right choices that will lead us to choose God and in so doing find true happiness, perfect peace and everlasting life.



We have all seen this classic image in the above cartoon! An individual is confronted with a dilemma and they are compelled to make a choice. They begin to discern and weigh up the pros and cons and confront the inner struggle. Do they listen to the Angel on the one shoulder or the devil on the other shoulder? Who do you normally listen to?

Away from the cartoon image we all find ourselves confronted with daily decisions and choices. Some are minor from *'What shall we have for tea tonight?'* Others are a little more serious, *'Is this person/issue causing problems in my life and do I need to step away and distance myself from them/it?; Does my mouth get me into trouble by my gossip, distortion of truth and facts and ill-informed criticisms and judgements?'* While other decisions are life changing, *'Shall I apply for that job? Shall I ask her to marry me? Do I step out of my comfort zone, let go of being in control and offer more of myself to God?'* When I have had to make a serious or life changing decision I've found it useful to seek out advice from others and have a trustworthy person who I can use as a soundboard. It has been through others guidance, stories of their own experience and listening to different viewpoints that have all contributed to making a better informed choice about future actions.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, when he gave a General Audience at St. Peter's Square in 2014 spoke about the Holy Spirit being our trustworthy friend and wise confidant when help is needed to make the right choices.

'When we receive and welcome him into our heart, the Holy Spirit immediately begins to make us sensitive to his voice and to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our intentions according to the heart of God. At the same time, he leads us more and more to turn our interior gaze to Jesus, as the model of our way of acting and of relating with God the Father and with the brethren.'

As we mentioned yesterday on our novena pilgrimage, we cannot just be a passive object in relation to the Holy Spirit, we are called to exercise and use the gifts he gives us. With the Gift of Counsel it is fundamental to have some knowledge about the circumstances and challenges that confront us in life. It is important that we actually know the teachings of Jesus passed on through his Apostles to the Church. Many people fall into the trap of assuming they know this or that teaching and have formed hard and solid opinions about it.

However, as I have found as a priest when you show them the actual words Jesus and unpack the teaching of the Lord there is often the reaction 'Oh, I never knew that!'. If we are to call ourselves disciples then we need to know the Word of God, his teachings and the Tradition handed on from Christ to the Apostles. We cannot base our ideas, notions and values on the world around us because as the Lord said:

***'I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them,
because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world.
I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They
do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.
Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.'* (Jn 17:14-17)**

Life, Family, Marriage, Sexuality, Social Justice and Education are all areas that, sadly, many people are making the wrong decisions in because they have not turned to Jesus to see his actions and hear his words that lead us to walk the right path. It is working with the gift of Counsel from the Holy Spirit that we are truly able to say: *'I am a real disciple who is doing my best, Come Holy Spirit help me to follow the Lord. Amen.'*

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

***Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.***

***All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,***

While endless ages run.

Amen.

In our quiet few moments on today's novena journey let us take time to ponder on the gift of Counsel. Is the right decision the easiest one? Will it cost me both personally and publicly? What are the fruits it will bear and will they blossom immediately? If I listen to my ego what effects will that have not only on those around me but also on my soul? How have the choices of 'I' and 'Me' disfigured Christ's face to those around me and the wider world? How often do I cry from the heart 'Come, O Holy Spirit' before I begin a task or make a judgement?

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue on day five of our Novena pilgrimage tomorrow.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Five: Wednesday 27th May 2020



The Gift of Fortitude

The Holy Spirit's gift of Fortitude is the most easiest to explain. This is the gift that bestows upon us the courage and strength to witness to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Saint Paul wrote to the Philippians saying, ***'There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength.'*** (Phil 4:13)



As we know Saint Paul, the great missionary Apostle, faced danger on a daily basis. ***‘...After he had spoken to the Hellenists...they were determined to kill him’ (Acts 9:29).***

‘...[They] worked upon some devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas...’ (Acts 13:50).

‘Feeling was running high, and the tribune, afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered his troops to go down and haul him out...’ (Acts 23:10).

Death, exile, torture and beatings were daily threats for Saint Paul and yet despite these dangers he still continued to witness to our Lord. Why? When he met the Risen Jesus on the Road to Damascus, Saint Paul went through a profound change and conversion. He had experienced Christ in a personal and intimate way that allowed him to see truth and reality. His faith was solid for he had actually encountered the Lord and wanted to share this wonderful moment with others. It was the Spirit’s gift of Fortitude that allowed him to take his testimony and witness of Jesus and proclaim it to the world. Obstacles, dangers and frequent threats no longer held any fear for him because, as he wrote to the Philippians, ***‘There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength.’ (Phil 4:13)*** Faith is never a private and quiet affair and as Saint Paul shows us, if we are open and co-operate with the Spirit’s gift of Fortitude, we too can overcome all fear and anxiety about others and the world.

A place that is part of my faith journey is the Royal English College of St. Alban in Valladolid, Spain. The Bishop sent me here as part of my initial formation for the priesthood.



In 1589 the college was founded for the training of men to become priests and return back to England that had outlawed the Faith. The college was home to many martyrs who had links to Lancashire and what is now the Diocese of Salford. Heroic priests like Saint Ambrose Barlow from Manchester, Saint John Plessington from Garstang and Blessed Thomas Whittaker from Burnley.



This is a picture of the college chapel on Martyrs Day. If you notice there is an alcove above the Tabernacle, on the back wall. In this alcove is a very ancient statue of Mary known as Our Lady Vulnerata. Daily and throughout the history of the college, seminarians, priests and martyrs have stood before this image of Our Blessed Mother and prayed. They have prayed for the help of Mary and the gift of Fortitude from the Holy Spirit. As Mary received the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation and conceived the Lord, so the prayer of the martyrs was also to receive the same Spirit as they returned to England and have the courage to face persecution and death.



Without the courage and conviction of those martyr priests and the perseverance of the people at home who held on to the faith, where would we be today? There were many good and holy lay people in England who continued to recite the outlawed prayers, and passed on the devotions and traditions that had sustained them for generations in their relationship with God. However, without the Eucharist there was no life and without Confession there was no growth. Priests were needed for the Sacraments and their ministry as much as dry earth needs water.

***'The poor and needy ask for water, and there is none,
their tongue is parched with thirst.
I, the Lord, will answer them,
I, the God of Israel, will not abandon them.
I will make rivers well up on the barren heights,
and fountains in the midsts of valleys;
turn the wilderness into a lake,
and dry ground into waterspring.'* (Is 41:17-18)**

The Spirit's gift of Fortitude working in both people and priests produces abundant fruit. What helped to fuel the martyr priests strength was that the land of England was ready to receive the Sacraments. The people of the earth of England were thirsting to encounter Jesus in the grace of those Sacraments and the ministry of the priesthood of Christ. What encouraged the recusant lay Catholics to persevere amidst trials and tribulations was that the Lord was sending shepherds because, as they knew, the Good Shepherd never abandons His flock, the sheep of his pasture.

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

*Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.*

*All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.
Amen.*

In our time of meditation today, let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us embrace the strength and courage that he lavishes upon us. What am I scared of? Can I recognise and name those fears, anxieties and worries in my own life? Is faith for me a private secret locked away and only revealed to those who won't challenge me about it? Rather than a missionary and proclaimer of truth do I water down the Faith? Do I call it, criticise and denounce it, so as to be part of the crowd and go with the flow of public opinion? Is there a situation or an issue in my life that I need to have the courage to witness to? Have I the strength to change some of my own weaknesses and bad habits?

***There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One
who gives me strength.'** (Phil 4:13)*

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue on our Novena pilgrimage tomorrow.

St. Augustine of Canterbury, Apostle of England, Pray for us.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Six: Thursday 28th May 2020



The Gift of Knowledge

The Book of Proverbs is from the Old Testament and contains a treasury of wise and sensible sayings, especially in regards to knowledge.

***'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools spurn wisdom and discipline.'*** (Prov 1:7)

***'The heart of the discerning gains in knowledge,
the ear of the wise man searches for knowledge.'*** (Prov 18:15)

***'The heart of the discerning makes knowledge its search,
the mouth of fools feed on folly.'*** (Prov 15:14)

Knowledge is important or as another famous worldly turn of phrase goes, 'Knowledge is power!' Universities, academies, centres of higher learning are all places where knowledge is imparted to willing minds. As we are all finding in this present lockdown, a lot of knowledge is at our fingertips with the quick push of a button. The internet, search engines, 'Alexa' and other information-based technologies are allowing us to access information quickly and efficiently to help expand our knowledge. However, human knowledge is often corrupted. We have all heard of the recent 'fake news' scandals that distort information; manipulated texts and images, cut and pasted to suit the message of a particular group or political authority; and sadly, knowledge is not only fragmented on global and international scales but locally. The gossip who tells lies and half-truths to others and besmirches the character of others. Knowledge is good and powerful only if rooted in truth and that is why we need the Holy Spirit.

A simple explanation of the Holy Spirit's gift of Knowledge is that it allows a believer to relate the Scriptures and the life of Jesus in the Gospels as well as the Tradition of the Church to all aspects of their own personal life. There is a story about of the monk and mystic, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux which helps us to delve a little deeper into this gift of the Spirit.



Saint Bernard was asked by some novices what would he rather possess Truth or Jesus Christ? Bernard responded immediately that he would choose Truth. The novices was scandalised! How could their abbot pick the Truth over possessing Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Bernard further explained his answer to them with a quote from the Gospel:

***'Jesus said: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.
No one can come to the Father except through me.'* (Jn 14:6)**

Jesus and Truth are synonymous said Saint Bernard. The Lord himself clearly showed this when he told the disciples, ***'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'*** To know Jesus, to really know him and sincerely follow him means that the truth we base our lives on must be rooted in him and him alone. How we shape and form our lives must be in imitation of him. How we think, speak and act must be as another Christ if we want others to see and live by the truth.

***'...If you make my word your home
you will indeed be my disciples,
you will learn the truth
and the truth will make you free.'* (Jn 8:31b-32)**

Truth will set us free from the chains of lies and the prison of ignorance. Jesus who is the Truth, sets us free from the boggy mire of sin, from the grasp of the father of lies. Again, we see in the Book of Revelation this reality:

'Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Victory and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that our persecutor, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down.' (Rev 12:10)

When we allow the Holy Spirit's gift of Knowledge to work through us, when hold on to the Lord and follow not just his footsteps but his words and actions and make them our own. When we try to live in perfect symmetry with the Son of God then our true knowledge begins to grow and bear fruit. No matter what events, tragedies, joys and sorrows come our way, then the Spirit's gift of knowledge helps us in bringing Christ, bringing Truth to the situation.

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

***Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.***

***All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.
Amen.***

In the silence of our hearts let us turn to God the Spirit and ask for a renewal of the gift of Knowledge. Let us use the gifts of Fortitude, Wisdom and Counsel to further deepen this divine knowledge and incorporate it into our own lives. Have we encountered issues, subjects and topics of conversation that have contradicted the Truth of Jesus and what he taught? Do worldly arguments about life, relationships and secular morality seem plausible? Have we ever made the effort to increase our knowledge of Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life? Have we ever sought out and made time to read, listen and learn from different sources of Jesus' Truth in the Church? Is our knowledge of the Sacraments at a certain level? Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Confession. Do we use it or make excuses and give human reasons that it is not necessary because of this or that? By denying the validity of His Sacraments can we see that we deny Truth and walk away from Him?

***'If we say we have no sin in us,
we are deceiving ourselves
and refusing to admit the truth.'** (1 Jn 1:8)*

***'Do all you can to present yourself in front of God as a man who has come through his trials, and a man who has no cause to be ashamed of his life's work and has kept a straight course with the message of the truth.'** (2 Tim 2:15)*

***'The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth.'** (Jn 1:14)*

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue our Novena journey tomorrow reflecting on the Gift of Piety.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Seven: Friday 29th May 2020



The Gift of Piety

‘No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.’ (Mt 6:24)

Jesus’ words, quoted above from Matthew’s Gospel, make a lot of practical sense. You cannot serve two masters because both will have different wants that require time and the fulfilment of specific demands. The slave is pulled in opposite directions and becomes exhausted dividing up time and action for their respective masters.

The Holy Spirit’s gift of Piety saves us from being in this tug of war contest between two masters. It is through this gift that our hearts become inflamed with a genuine and devoted love for the One Master – God Almighty. In our modern parlance the words ‘*piety*’, ‘*pious*’ and ‘*devout*’ have come to be linked with negative connotations. They are tainted with images of subservience, servility and demeaning obeisance. The generic fictional character of ‘Igor’, especially played by Marty Feldman the horror film ‘*Frankenstein*’, seems to illustrate this negativity perfectly.



The above photo is not what the Spirit's gift of piety should like. A better image and example comes from the actions of small children found in the Gospel.

'People were bringing little children to him, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away but when Jesus saw this he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' Then he put his arms round them, laid his hands on them and gave them his blessing.'

(Mk 10:13-16)



True piety and devotion manifests itself in the simple trust and love of a little child. I have watched the smaller members of my own family show this. When they first see Gran and Grandad they drop everything to race over for a hug, and in the case of Grandad a sweet! No matter what activity they are doing they stop and run over to their grandparents. No matter who is in their way or who finds themselves in their path, they are oblivious and push past, just to greet their Gran and Grandad. No matter if there has been tantrums in the day, a stint on the naughty step, a telling off from mum or dad, or a poorly tummy and new tooth, as soon as little one sees Gran and Grandad a joy comes over them. This is the look of true piety and devotion – genuine, sincere and joyful love.

To be pious, to be a devout Catholic, should not mean to feel enslaved, bitter and angry. To be a devout Catholic should mean to be a person of joy. Joy that they know they are loved by God and want to respond to that love with every fibre of their being. When we co-operate with the Holy Spirit's gift of Piety all prayer ceases to be a chore, a necessary task, and becomes an outpouring of intimate dialogue with the Lord. Attending Mass, spending time before the Blessed Sacrament at Exposition no longer feels like an outdated and unfulfilling practice, but instead becomes a grace filled time; Time spent in the company of the person you truly love. With the gift of Piety the Sacraments from Confession to Anointing of the Sick are no longer rituals but beautiful moments where Christ is able to touch and heal us. The reluctance to go to a Vigil Mass on a miserable wet and cold Saturday night in November evaporates into a desire to be in the very Presence of Love Himself. How many of us in lockdown, even with a multitude of various live streamed Masses available, are feeling that empty space within that only the concrete reality of actually being in Church before the Tabernacle can fill. This should be the face of piety – joyous love as these Sister's are showing below!



‘Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord and not for men, knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you his heirs. It is Christ the Lord that you are serving...’ (Col 3:23-24)

Veni Creator Spiritus

***Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.***

***You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!***

***You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!***

***O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.***

***Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.***

***Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.***

***All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.
Amen.***

In this quiet time of the Novena today, let's reflect on how we express the Spirit's gift of Piety in our own lives. Has the practice of our faith become a laborious burden? Do we ever go the extra mile and spend time with the Blessed Sacrament? Does going to a further Mass in the week interfere with our own personal timetables? On holiday do we rest from God as well as from work? After booking our hotel, arranging our nights out and day activities do we research where we can go to Mass to give praise and thanks to God? To be in love with another means to nurture and foster a relationship – how are we doing that with the Lord? Have we ever explored various approved devotions and tried them? Do we understand the devotions we are praying now and are they edifying and helping us in our relationship with God?

We ask you Holy Spirit to pour the gift of Piety into our hearts like fuel, so that the flame of love within us may become a burning fire of devotion, for our merciful and loving God.
Amen.

***'I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord;
I repeat, what I want is your happiness.'* (Phil 4:4)**

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

God Bless and keep praying.

We continue our Novena pilgrimage tomorrow reflecting on the seventh gift of the Holy Spirit, '*Fear of the Lord*', and what it actually means.

Normally on a Friday I have been sharing any further updates from the diocese in regards to the opening of churches but nothing new has been emailed this week. Let's keep praying and asking the Holy Spirit to help us with the changes that inevitably will come.

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Eight: Saturday 30th May 2020



The Gift of Fear of the Lord

Language is so important. It allows us to communicate with others and make ourselves understood. Every word and phrase conveys meaning and purpose. Context is essential in the dynamics of language because it is in context that words reveal their true definition. Think of '*Hair*' and '*Hare*'. Both words are spelt differently and refer to two separate things yet when pronounced aloud both words sound the same in the English language. The context in which these two words are spoken is key to distinguishing which '*Hare*' fights in the moonlight and which '*Hair*' has turned grey in worry. The word '*office*' is another word that needs context to help define what it is referring to. There is the office of authority, role and position that an individual holds or there is the physical structure like a building which a person works in. '*Love*' in English is another problematic word that needs context to fully appreciate its meaning and to understand what it's trying to express. '*I love chocolate*' and '*I love my children*' both convey two different values while using the same word '*love*'. The love of a sweet is very different and superficial compared to a parent's love of their own flesh and blood.

Where is all this talk of words leading? Well, the Holy Spirit's gift of Fear of the Lord can appear a daunting present from God, one that anyone would be reluctant to receive. It has the word Fear in after all. However, once we understand its true meaning then we see that it's a wonderful gift to have. Fear of the Lord is not about being scared and living in terror of God but about holding Him in deep reverence which in turn affects our behaviour towards Him and the world. Another translation for this gift of the Spirit is, '*The Gift of Awe and Respect of the Lord.*' This translation takes away the negativity of the old Fear which has been corrupted in modern usage and gives us a clearer understanding of this last gift of the Holy Spirit.

In 1893, Edvard Munch painted his infamous masterpiece known as '*The Scream*'.



The bright rich and vivid colours Munch used do not hide the stark sense of hopelessness in the painting. The screaming figure, with gaping mouth and hands held against its skeletal deathly pained face emphasises a doom and fated existence. There are various theories about the inspiration behind the painting. Some say Munch reflecting on his sister's recent committal to a mental health hospital and others that his subconscious was thinking about the violent eruption of a volcano. The fear portrayed in 'The Scream' is paralysing. There is a sense of being stuck in an eternal moment with no future, no hope in sight. The build up

of worry and angst bursts out in the never ending scream that turns the skies blood red. The painters inner fears are expressed on canvas.

The Fear of the Lord conveys the complete opposite to the message conveyed by Edvard Munch. The Spirit's gift of Fear of the Lord empowers an individual to move towards God, to walk in the direction of life and in so doing destroys the paralysis of Fear which roots us to the ground. We have all heard of the phrase '*Scared Stiff*', an encounter of such terror that it takes our life away and rigor mortis, the pallor of death settles in. The Fear of the Lord counters this by enlivening us into action, godly and holy action.

The Bible is full of examples of people facing imminent danger and life threatening challenges and yet because of the Holy Spirit's gift of Fear they move from danger and threat to peace, the peace of God. Take the heroic midwives found in the Book of Exodus.



'The king of Egypt then spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah, and the other Puah. 'When you midwives attend the Hebrew women,' he said 'watch carefully. If it is a boy, kill him; if a girl let her live.' But the midwives were God-fearing: they disobeyed the command of the king of Egypt and let the boys live...God was kind to the midwives...Since the midwives revered God he granted them descendants.' (Ex 1:15-16, 20a -21)

Shiphrah and Puah are ordered by their Pharaoh, their ruler to kill all boys who pose a threat to him. They disobey not for any political motivation but solely because they '*were God-fearing*'. This gift of Fear of the Lord reveals the strength these women were given to love and to put their love into action. They would have been aware of the consequences of defying Pharaoh but love conquers all fear. This courageous love, this hardy and persevering love is part of the Spirit's gift of

Fear of the Lord. The blessing of God for these two midwives, because of their love and God-fearing behaviour, was that they were blessed with their own children.

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850–1917) is another example of the gift of Fear of the Lord working through someone and producing the fruits of love and holiness for the greater good of the world.



The story goes that she fell into a lake when she was seven years old and nearly drowned. The incident was traumatic and left her with a lifelong fear of water. So later on in life when she approached the Pope to ask his approval for a new religious order of missionaries to China, she had hoped to travel over land. Instead, the Holy Father sent her to America which meant travel by boat on the Atlantic Ocean – a very large mass of water indeed! Saint Frances Cabrini was unwilling to let her fears stand in the way of the salvation of souls, so she climbed aboard a ship because the love of God was more powerful and more life giving than the fear of water and her past trauma. She would make over two dozen transatlantic trips that would take en route to becoming the first American saint. The Fear of the Lord is not a gift where we live in shaking terror of God, but a gift that draws out our love and devotion to Him that expresses itself in action and unselfish living!

Veni Creator Spiritus

*Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.*

*You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!*

*You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!*

*O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.*

*Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.*

*Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.*

*All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.*

Amen.

In our silent prayer today let us reflect on these words of Saint Paul writing to the early Christian community at Corinth:

'...Dear brothers, let us wash off all that can soil either body or spirit, to reach perfection of holiness in the fear of God.' (2 Cor 7:1)

What do we need to wash off ourselves that keeps us from being true disciples and worshippers of God? Do we live in terror, constant anxiety and worry? How can we wash off these elements that stunt our spiritual growth and true living? How can we correct those sins that reveal our lack of awe and reverence for the Lord? What are those anxieties that we need to overcome in order to live for God and love for God?

Let us remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit's gift of Fear of the Lord aids us in our living for Him and our loving for Him. It's not about cowering in terror but walking tall in God's Presence that allows us to overcome all worry and danger.

'I no longer fear God, but I love Him. For perfect love casts out fear.'

St. Antony of Egypt

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Tomorrow is Pentecost Sunday, the final day of our parish Novena to the Holy Spirit and it is also the end of the Easter Season.

God Bless and keep praying

Fr. O'Brien

Parish Novena to the Holy Spirit
Day Nine: Pentecost Sunday 31st May 2020



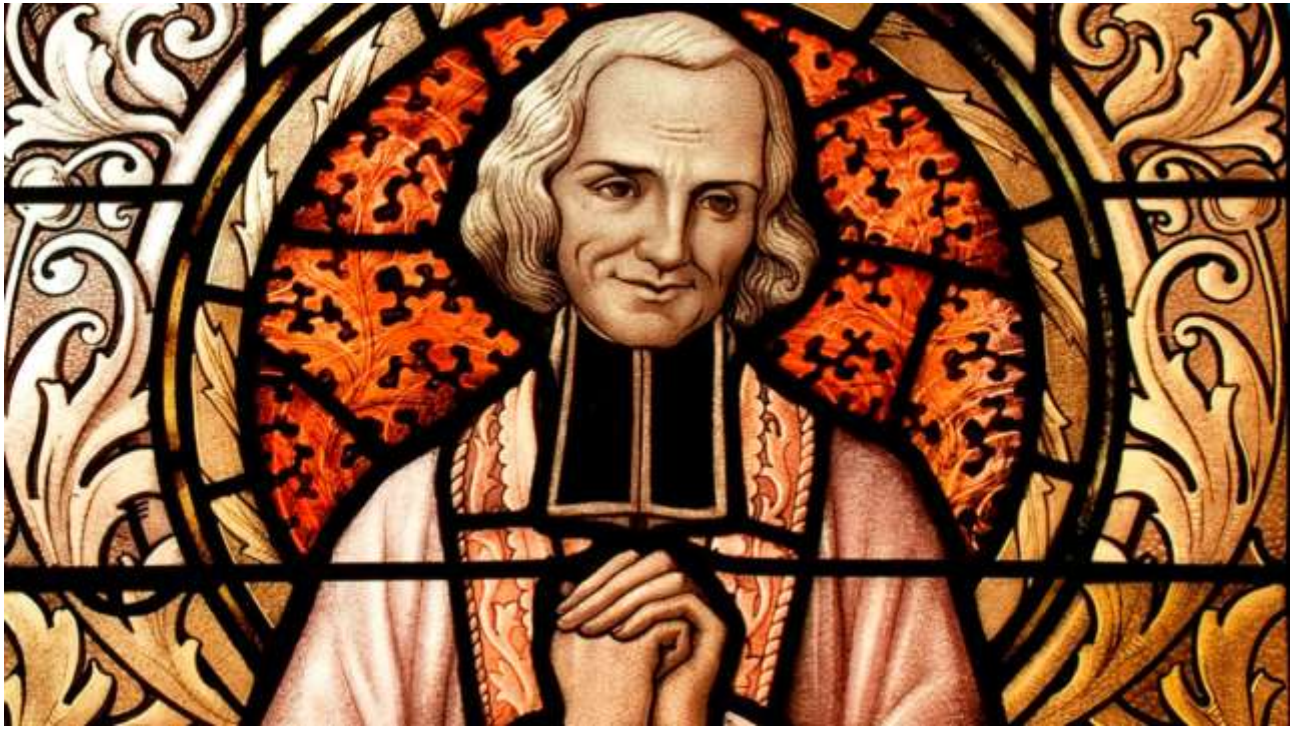
Happy Pentecost! We have come to the end of our Novena pilgrimage. Today is Day Nine and throughout our journey together we have reflected on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit; Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord. Each gift, freely given, is bestowed upon us so that we can fulfil our baptismal calling. A calling to be an active disciple of Jesus Christ in the Church that he founded on the rock of Peter. A calling to go out to others and share the good news about Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

'Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them.

And it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit.' (St. Irenaeus)

The above quote, from Saint Irenaeus, is found in the Catechism (#683) and beautifully expresses the loving actions of all Persons in the One God, The Most Holy Trinity. A mystery that defies logic and human sensibility but is felt and

experienced by all of us. What awakens our faith in the Trinity and opens us to be receptive to this mystery of God is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who has been our companion over these last nine days and who we all now hopefully see and hear a little more clearly and feel a little more closer to.



Saint John Vianney is the patron saint for all priests and a disciple who knew his need for the Holy Spirit. He wrote this meditation:

“Take in one hand a sponge full of water, and in the other a little pebble; press them equally. Nothing will come out of the pebble, but out of the sponge will come abundance of water. The sponge is the soul filled with the Holy Spirit, and the stone is the cold and hard heart which is not inhabited by the Holy Spirit.”

A disciple is not called to be a robot who performs certain functions to give the appearance of being a Christian. A disciple is called to be ‘*another Christ*’ to the world around them. They are to imitate the Lord in his unconditional love, mercy, forgiveness and gentleness. They are called to be the beating heart of Jesus for all the Church and the people they live and work with. That heart can only truly beat if, as St. John Vianney wrote, it is filled like a sponge with the Holy Spirit.

We need to be ever more mindful of the Holy Spirit especially during this present time. Lockdown is beginning to ease at different paces both globally and locally, with countries and peoples still being sensibly cautious. However, what is emerging is that life has changed. No matter how great or small life has changed. Change is never comfortable or welcomed because it disturbs the status quo but

our dislike and aversion to it does not alter the fact of its definite presence. The closure of churches has been dramatic and it would be naive to say that it has not effected anyone. From our Holy Father the Pope right down to the little baby waiting for baptism – everyone has been effected by Covid-19.

What has emerged during this pandemic is the voice of the Holy Spirit. The amount of people who have shown Fortitude whether they be a key worker or an individual going the extra mile for a neighbour and stranger. The gifts of Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge have seen people taking time out of ‘the rat race’ and fast paced world to view life differently. There is a new appreciation for the relationships of family and friends. Prayer and belief in God seems to be bucking the perception that the 21st century is a non-religious century. The gift of Counsel has been making people discern their daily decisions and frequent choices in life. *‘Do I need to buy this much food? How much do I waste weekly? How much time do I spend on the internet rather than speaking with real people? Is my job, my career going in the right direction? Am I living as a disciple or just being a good actor and playing the part?’* And finally the gifts of Piety and Fear of the Lord have not sat dormant but have made people rethink prayer, their relationship with God and their own vocation.

In these next few months we will all need to continue to ask the Holy Spirit to be our constant companion on the future road. There will be changes for us as a Church, diocese, deanery, parish and as individual believers in the ways we respond to the Lord’s commandment of loving God and each other.



‘You know that the Holy Spirit constitutes the soul, the life blood of the Church and of every individual Christian: He is the Love of God who makes of our hearts his dwelling place and enters into communion with us. The Holy Spirit abides with us always, he is always within us, in our hearts.’

(General Audience, St. Peter’s Square 9th April 2014)

Veni Creator Spiritus

*Come, Holy Spirit, Creator come,
From your bright heavenly throne!
Come, take possession of our souls,
And make them all your own.*

*You who are called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction, and true love!*

*You who are sevenfold in your grace,
Finger of God's right hand,
His promise, teaching little ones
To speak and understand!*

*O guide our minds with your blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame,
And with your strength which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.*

*Far from us drive our hellish foe
True peace unto us bring,
And through all perils guide us safe
Beneath your sacred wing.*

*Through you may we the Father know,
Through you the eternal Son
And you the Spirit of them both
Thrice-blessed three in one.*

*All glory to the Father be,
And to the risen Son;
The same to you, O Paraclete,
While endless ages run.*

Amen.

In the final prayers of our parish Novena let us ask God the Holy Spirit to remain with us always and allow us the grace to cooperate with those freely bestowed gifts that he pours upon us. Saint Paul in his letter to the Galatians gives us a good barometer to test if we are living in the life of the Spirit or if we are living

the life of our own self and ego. I think it is important that the Apostles words are quoted in full.

'Let me put it like this: if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing...When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility; idolatry and sorcery; feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy; drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self control...You cannot belong to Jesus Christ unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires. Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit. We must stop being conceited, provocative and envious.' (Gal 5:16-25)

Some will roll their eyes and mock Paul for his words and accuse him of being old fashioned for what they see as outdated sins and values. The truths he speaks out about though, do not change. It is the world that tries to water sin down and remodel the appearance of faults and failings so that it can feel better about itself and it's decisions. What words in his list resonate with us? Do we find ourselves bearing much of the Spirit's fruits of patience, self-control and love or more the rotten produce of feuds and wrangling etc.

O God the Holy Spirit, make our souls that sponge which draws all your gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord into our inner being. Help us in our daily lives to embrace and use those gifts to water the thirsting world around us that cries out for Jesus Christ. Assist us in our baptismal calling to build up your true and only One Church, and not hold on to our own selfishness. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

V. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray:

O God, who taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

I hope that despite my poverty some of the reflections and meditations I have written over these last nine days have helped you in your prayer. The next posting will be on Friday 5th June 2020 and I will let you know if we have received any more information or updates from the diocese.

God Bless and keep praying.

Happy Pentecost!

Fr. O'Brien