

**The Holy Spirit:  
An exercise in *lectio divina*  
Reflection #2 of 3**

Michael Whelan SM

*As we prepare for the Feast of Pentecost (2023),  
Fr Michael offers three reflections on the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

**Take time to reflect prayerful on the texts below listening with the ear of the heart**

In our first Reflection, we noted how Luke spoke of the Spirit:

*I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with **power from on high** (Luke 24:49).*

Perhaps the best-known event that celebrates this bestowal of “power from on high” is found in Acts 2:1-4 – also written by Luke:

*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.*

In a remarkable few words, St Paul reiterates that “the power from on high” is actively present within us all empowering and directing our daily lives:

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:14-17).*

These words of St Paul are worth many hours of meditation! They are a stunning affirmation of what it means to be human and Christian. We can link them with Paul’s declaration to the Christians in Galatia:

*I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:19).*

In the Gospel of John, we read of Jesus “breathing” the Spirit on the disciples who are to go out and be his message in the world:

*“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:19-23).*

In the Christian Scriptures, the same empowering, creative and creating Presence of the Holy Spirit is referred to in different ways:

*John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like **a dove**, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God” (John 1:32-34).*

*“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 forever. 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” (John 14:15-17).*

*For all who are **led by the Spirit of God are children of God** ... If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14 & 17).*

*For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but **righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit** (Romans 14:17).*

*Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with **a seal for the day of redemption**. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 4:29-5:2).*

*you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, **written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God**, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).*

Apart from “wind”, “breath”, “spirit”, and “fire”, the Holy Spirit is compared to:

**Clothing:** *clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).*

**A dove:** *when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."* (Matthew 3:16-17).

**A Pledge:** *putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment* (2 Corinthians 1:22).

**Oil:** *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power* (Acts 10:38).

**Water:** *Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'* " Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39)

**Wine:** *Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Ephesians 5:18-20).

### **For further listening and reflection**

Edwin Hatch (1835-1889) – Anglican priest – wrote a beautiful hymn called "Breathe on me Breath of God". Find an audio version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4SWYXpBcxM>

1. 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.
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Until my heart is pure,  
Until with Thee I will one will,  
To do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly Thine,  
Until this earthly part of me  
Glows with Thy fire divine.
4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
So shall I never die,  
But live with Thee the perfect life  
Of Thine eternity.