

God the Holy Spirit

Jesus says in the Gospel that the Father (and he) will send us the Spirit to '*lead you into the Truth*'. (John 16:13)

This applies first of all to us as individuals: The Spirit moves in **my** life – awakening my understanding of what really matters in life, and stirring me into responsible action.

If I open my heart and my life to the Spirit of the Lord I will come to understand more clearly the kind of person that I am – and the growth that there must be in me if I am to come fully alive.

I will perceive the different ways in which I am closed in on myself, or afraid of letting go – and letting God guide my life.

I will see the ways in which I am still refusing to give of myself, or to trust in God's love and providence.

By the **light** the Holy Spirit casts upon my heart and life I will be enabled to see the limits of my loving, the extent of my selfishness.

I will come to realise how often I refuse to serve the needs of others; how often I resist the will of God – even *resent* it.

I will see how many times there are in the course of any day when I say 'no' when I should have said 'yes' – and 'yes' when I should have said 'no'.

So the Holy Spirit of God reveals to me my selfishness, my sinfulness. The Holy Spirit exposes me for what I am.

But the Holy Spirit is also a **power**.

From the Spirit comes the strength I need to leave my old self behind, to overcome my weaknesses and habits of sin.

From the Spirit comes the grace I need to open my heart to those who are difficult to love.

From the Spirit comes the courage I need to take on new responsibilities in the life of the Church, in the service of others.

From the Spirit comes the nerve I need to respond trustingly to the invitations of God that I hear whispered in my heart of hearts if I am willing to be still in God's presence for a time each day.

Only with the help of the Spirit will I see what God expects of me, and be able to carry it out.

So the Holy Spirit of God will bring me out of my self-indulgence, with all its sad consequences, so that I can come to share increasingly in the generosity of God – with all the lovely fruits that come thereby.

What Jesus says also applies to the community of believers, the Church. The Spirit will lead **us** into the complete Truth.

From the first beginnings of the Church on the first Pentecost Day, and down our somewhat chequered history, the Holy Spirit has been present in our midst.

That is why the Church is still here, and why it will be here until the end of time.

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand ever more clearly our relationship with God as God's People in history.

The Spirit helps us to understand the relationship we should have with the world in which we live.

In the early days of the Church, which are related in the Acts of the Apostles, we can observe how the Christian Community recognised its complete dependence upon God.

The faithful were acutely aware that any *worthwhile* action **must** be inspired by the Spirit – and so they waited together in prayer upon God's for God's will to become more clear.

From God alone would come the *strength* and the *direction* that they needed – the **Light** and the **Power**.

The same must be true for us: only when our collective efforts derive from God will they be fruitful and enduring.

We, the Church, must continually reflect on our relationship with the world of our time. There is always the temptation to become too secular, or too detached from the world.

Like the Apostles, we are not to remain shut in on ourselves in an upper room, fearful and uncertain, shunning the world outside.

Like them we are to enter into that world with courage and enthusiasm, and a new vision - that of Christ. We are to embrace the world with the love of the Lord Jesus who came '*not to condemn the world but to save it*'. (John 3:17)

The Church lives in the world, belongs in the world - so that the world may be redeemed: set free from that innate self-interest which exists in the heart of humankind ('original sin') and that continually threatens to destroy our society, and indeed our planet home.

How often does it happen – perhaps in every generation – that just as we human beings begin to regard ourselves as having become civilised we rediscover the pervasiveness of our barbarism.

In its teachings – and in its life-style – the Church must question the **values** of the age. But the Church should never forget to respond to the **needs** of the time.

We who are the Church must always challenge the ideas and behaviour of the world around us with Gospel **Truth** – and we must serve that world with Gospel **Love**.

The Christian Community is to avoid becoming in any way elitist or exclusive.

We must avoid being too severe in our strictures – or to lower too much our expectations that all should live in accordance with the teachings and example of Christ.

We should not become too distant from the daily struggles of suffering, troubled humanity. Nor should we become so embroiled in human concerns that we no longer lift our gaze towards a world that lies beyond our present experience: the Kingdom of God.

Such ways of thinking and acting are signs of **corruption** in the body of the Church.

We who count ourselves as friends of Jesus must always be respectful of human insights and have the highest regard for all earnest human endeavour.

We must be profoundly compassionate towards all human weakness – even that which shocks or scandalises us.

In our hearts we must be always be sure of, and joyful in, the presence and guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

Such dispositions are signs of **vitality** in the body of the Church.

The annual Feast of Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit of God lives and moves in **my** life, and in the life of the **family of believers**.

We are called to entrust ourselves the direction of the Spirit, and to be reliant on the Spirit's strength.

God's Holy Spirit is not a 'what' but a 'who' – our comforter, our advocate, our companion, our friend.

We are to be open to...and responsive to the Spirit of God.

If we are then the fruits of the Spirit will be evident in our own personal life, and in the life of the Church.

Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit
(St Paul's Letter to the Galatians 5:25)