

GOD'S SPIRIT POURED OUT—ON US

You may remember back at the turn of the millennium there were various contests about the most significant developments of the preceding 1000 years. Then there were contests about the most important inventions over that period. The printing press, the gas engine, the electric light, the locomotive, radio, television, the computer and so on. For me, the most significant invention over those years was one that rarely gets mentioned or even thought about because it has become so commonplace that for most of us we take it for granted or simply presuppose its existence. I refer to the electric socket in our homes and places of business. The harnessing of electricity in itself and then the making of that harnessing available to all people was, for me, the greatest invention.

I look around the kitchen in the Rectory. There is the refrigerator and the freezer on one side of the kitchen to keep things cool or frozen. Then there is the oven and the microwave which enables us to heat and cook things. The toaster turns bread into toast and the Keurig turns water into coffee. The fan circulates the air and the overhead and counter lights enable us to see what we are doing and eating. The television and the radio keep us tuned into what is happening in the world. The washer and dryer clean our clothes and dry our clothes. The iron finishes things off when need be.

Air conditioning and heat pump. Hair dryer and tooth brush. Hair curler and clock. Recharger, computer, Smartphone, printer, scanner, cellphone, and on and on. So many different appliances enabling us to do amazing things. All need to be plugged into an electric socket. All need an energy source in order for them to work and do their thing. But the intriguing thing is that they don't need different kinds of energy but just the ordinary garden variety of energy so long as it has been harnessed. Without that energy source none of those items would do what they are designed to do.

Us too. Without our energy source we will not be able to do the things that are ours to do. Without our power source we will want to be a certain kind of person but we will not be able to be that person. For us who believe in Jesus Christ, who gather here today to give God the Father the worship of our hearts and to be nourished and sustained by Jesus himself in this Eucharistic celebration, for all of us we have need of the empowering source. But we also have been given that empowering source.

A few minutes ago I mentioned about thirty items that all use electricity to operate. Let me speak of the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit empowers us to do. When we were young and studying for the sacrament of Confirmation we learned of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, devotion, reverence for the Lord. We also learned of what we called the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, equanimity, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity, gentleness.

There are other gifts that come to us through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit: integrity, forgiveness, contrition, mercy, compassion, trust, hope, good humor, honor, encouragement.

There are more. The list can go on but you get the idea. The one and same power source enables all these wonderful attributes and traits to grow within us and issue for from us. All of these attributes make this world a much better place; they make me a better person. They make you the best person you can be. But all is rooted in the Holy Spirit. But do you “feel” the Holy Spirit or do you “sense” the Holy Spirit? Do you experience the strong driving wind or see tongues as of fire? No. Me neither. So, what is the Spirit like? How does the Spirit show the Divine Presence? The Spirit indwells your soul and my soul. The Spirit is very subtle and gentle with us. The Spirit does not over power us or take control of us or ever force himself upon us. That is not God’s way. It is always a blending of my spirit and the Holy Spirit so it become difficult to know where one ends and the other begins. That is by God’s design. He wants us to make our effort and to realize the good we are called to and the good we do. God really isn’t looking for all the credit. God is looking for the results. Working together—what kind of world can we make this world? The answer is pretty amazing.

You have almost all been confirmed. Has your Confirmation taken hold in your life? Are you aware of the reality of God’s Spirit in your daily life? Or is it more like something you know you have but don’t exactly know how to work it? Do you know how to access the power of the Spirit? First off, we have to acknowledge that the gift is real and that it has been given. Second, I have to realize that God’s Spirit lives and indwells deep in my soul, deep in your soul. Third, God’s Spirit is subtle and assisting me even when I am unaware. Fourth, I must ask for assistance. “Spirit of the living God please strengthen me. Please give me anew the gift of patience or chastity or integrity or generosity or wisdom.” We have to ask. Asking opens us up to the Spirit already given.

Fifth, we have to stop lying to ourselves. Meaning: the things we say to ourselves within our own hearts or sometimes out loud for others to hear which defeat us and which are simply not true. Things about whether we can forgive another person, about whether there is real goodness in us or not, whether we can keep carrying our own cross or whether we can help another to carry their cross. We lie to ourselves about these things. We think to ourselves that we can’t. And the truth is we can—but not by ourselves, not without help. But help has been given. The Advocate. The Paraclete. The Holy Spirit. The power and energy source that enables us to be our best selves and to continue to make the gift of ourselves to others in love. That is the truth of things. And that is why Christ and the Father have sent their very Spirit to us. The Spirit has been given. And I submit to you. If you would believe in that truth more, you will begin to experience the Spirit more and feel the Spirit’s presence. You might even get excited, fired up, taking deep breaths of truly fresh air, becoming more fully alive. Hmm. Sounds like that first Pentecost to me.