

*Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity  
Archdiocese of Southwark*

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**IN CHRIST**

**Together in Christ, Diocesan Bulletin for Christian Unity,  
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## **EDITORIAL**

One of our long-serving subscribers, Mr David Barrett died in July aged 81. David has been with the Unity Commission for many years and became the Chair to SW Area for a while. May he rest in peace. We hope to include an article about his work next time. If you can contribute anything to this let me know.

The Legacy of the Papal visit has an important focus on the Mission for Unity. Among many events being encouraged this year were Corpus Christi celebrations. We report a parish visit to Arundel for the annual Carpet of Flowers procession on the feast day and the amazing support it is given by the local churches there.

Paul Clark tells us about his encounters on holiday in Greece and how he found a real feeling for how catholic Christianity is.

With the second talk, given to the Southwark Unity Commission last May. we complete the teaching by Sr Mary John on Spiritual Ecumenism. The theme is about the way that, through prayer, we can bring deeper knowledge of God's uniting work.

We complete the tribute to the work of the late Una Ratcliff by giving the final part of her talk on the Holy Spirit, The first part was printed in February.

This is the last 80p issue of TiC. The cover price will be £1 starting with the February 2012 issue. Orders of over five annual sets will be post free and more than ten sets will be discounted so that groups and parishes can have something for parish funds.

*Michael*

## **CORPUS CHRISTI CELEBRATION 2011**

Our Lady of the Rosary Prayer Group, Blackfen, marked the Feast Day of Corpus Christi by a visit to Arundel Cathedral and the Carpet of Flowers there. Other groups from within the parish joined in making it a true celebration of the feast for all parishioners.

On entering the Cathedral we were met by a most beautiful display of the Corpus Christi carpet of flowers. These adorned not only the altar but also the central and side aisles. For those of us who had not visited the Cathedral previously it was a wonderful experience. During our visit we encountered many people from other denominations who joined the procession sang the hymns being broadcast round the town. It certainly conveyed to us of how little difference there is between the churches. It is surely a sign of the unity within the churches giving us great hope for the future.

We were struck by the dedication of the voluntary workers within the cathedral who must have given a great deal of their time in helping to make it such a great occasion.

On the spiritual side we had a magnificent Mass celebrated by Bishop Kieran Conroy of Arundel and Brighton Diocese assisted by a large number of priests from within the diocese. The Choir provided a spiritual background truly befitting of the occasion culminating in a very rewarding day.

St Pio Prayer Group  
Blackfen

## GREEK TO ME

In the ecumenical picture we see the big items – Cardinal Kaspar, controversies, conferences, etc. But there are small items, too. Casual contacts are also part of the picture.

Let me tell you about a couple of casual contacts I've made recently. We're coming to the end of our ten day, thousand mile tour of classical Greece – four of us and Nikos our driver/guide. We've 'done' Meteora, Thermopylae, Delphi, Olympia. Messini, Sparta, Corinth, Mycenae, Methoni and Athens. It's been a heavy schedule, with no allowances made for age or fatigue. Not that we would have wanted it otherwise – it's been a wonderful experience. But towards the end, dripping with heat and history, we feel we've earned a couple of days of rest and relaxation on the island of Hydra.

The hydrofoil takes a couple of hours, speeding across the sparkling Hellenic sea, to get there. Hydra, its distant blue mountains gradually growing out of the sea as we approach, is altogether another world from the untidy, traffic-jammed, protest-disrupted Athens and its port of Piraeus. A faint white streak on the horizon becomes a group of separate, sharp-edged houses crowding round a picturesque seaport. When we step out onto the cobbles of the quay everything is fresh and brilliant, but something our ears are accustomed to is missing. There are no cars. We wind our way through the steep narrow streets towards our hotel to the clack of hooves on stone and the braying of asses.

It's Saturday, 11 June 2011. Obviously, our chances of finding a Roman Catholic Church for Mass next morning are about as good as finding a mosque. As on the mainland, where the Greeks finally saw off the Turks only about a hundred years ago, this is strictly Orthodox territory. Roman Catholics belong elsewhere and the Muslims, they fervently pray, are gone forever.

As it happens, the island's church is just round the corner from our hotel. Sipping our pre-dinner drinks in the garden we hear chanting. We go out into the street, ducking under a bougainvillea ablaze with crimson flowers, to find out what's going on.

The Saturday evening service has started. Cautiously, we step out of the sunlight into the dim doorway. As our eyes re-adjust to the gloom we make out a row of life-size saints painted onto wooden panels, silver-framed icons, glass chandeliers (which wouldn't look out of place in the ballroom of a Grand Hotel), and a gilded altar overhung by the blue-and-white Greek national flag and the golden two-eagled flag of the Byzantine Empire. Two or three old ladies sit near the front. Other people – a mother with two toddlers and, later, a young couple – come in, kiss an icon near the door, light two or three tall thin brown candles and push them into a tray of sand. They sit with bowed heads for a while and then creep out.

We sit at the back, praying our own prayers, not forgetting the usual one for Christian unity.

To the right of the altar are two side-by-side wooden cubicles with a heavily book-laden rotating lectern set up before them. In one of them stands a young man in jeans and a T-shirt; in the other the priest. Greek Orthodox priests tend to look very much alike, and this one is no exception. He wears a full-length black robe and a cylindrical black hat. Behind his gold spectacles his eyes are sunk deep in the hollows of his eye-sockets. The lower half of his face is buried in a long, thick beard. I'm reminded of the representatives of the Orthodox hierarchy gathered round the coffin at Pope John Paul's funeral. In England and the rest of the Western world we've become unfamiliar with such uncompromising symbols of patriarchal authority.

The two men chant the texts in harsh alternating voices, occasionally overlapping in rough two-part harmony. I'm not sure if they are making mistakes or that this is how it's meant to be. It goes on interminably. The young man in the T-shirt beats the time and turns the pages of a huge leather-bound volume at roughly 20-minute intervals. I catch odd words – '*kyrie*' and '*alleluia*' – but otherwise it's all Greek to me. I don't want to leave, though. Dinner can wait. I'm happy just being there. But I'm surprised to detect in myself an almost Puritan distaste for the complicated architecture, the 'worship of idols', the grating music, the crepuscular over-decoration.

I'm quite aware that if there's a problem here it's not in the church and the ritual that I find myself in the presence of, but in my own ingrained cultural reflexes. That formidable-looking priest praying in an unfamiliar language is undoubtedly praying prayers that I could and should be praying myself. In Europe we've had centuries of Protestantism which have profoundly influenced us culturally and aesthetically even – dare I say it? – in our Catholic understanding of doctrine. It's been a different story in Greece, where there's been no Reformation, but a bitter, long-drawn-out confrontation with the Islam of successive Turkish invaders which has certainly left its mark on them. It leaves the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches of today looking and feeling very different, although of course they remain essentially what they were from the early days of our own era, the twin 'definitive' Christian churches. It just goes to show doesn't it? Much of what appears to be division isn't doctrinal at all, but cultural, historical and social.

This is true even in the part of South East London where I live. It isn't differences of doctrine that prevent the different denominations from coming together in worship. People simply prefer their own traditions and rituals – they are their comfort zones. To put it flippantly, I suspect that if we locked up all the theologians and told them they wouldn't be let out until they'd thrashed out all the doctrinal differences – and if they actually *did* – it would make surprisingly little difference. Everybody would go to church to give thanks for the ecumenical breakthrough, of course, but I bet they'd go to their *usual* churches to do it. Their Methodism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, etc, are functional religious identities that they'd feel lost, less Christian, without. So that was the first casual contact – with an unfamiliar church in an unfamiliar place.

My second was with a person. We left Hydra early on the next day, Sunday morning. Trundling our luggage past the church we heard the grating chants again. We didn't look in. We had a boat to catch. I didn't know whether the service inside was the equivalent of our own Mass, and there was no-one there to ask. In fact I still don't know.

Back in Piraeus we were picked up on the quay side by a new driver, who would take us to the Byzantine Museum in Athens, find us a place for lunch and get us to the airport in time for our afternoon flight back to London. His name was David. He spoke excellent English with a hint of Strine. Born in Melbourne he spoke Greek in his family circle and was sent to Saturday school to learn to read and write Greek, to know his nation's history and to be trained in the Orthodox faith. As he told us this a crucifix on a rosary swung slowly from the stem of his driving mirror.

The Byzantine Museum was an extremely challenging experience for this 74-year-old Englishman already suffering from severe information overload about ancient Greece. Here there were such artistic wonders, such mountain-ranges of unexplored historical knowledge (e.g. that 4<sup>th</sup> century England had been part of that empire – did *you* know that?) that he couldn't decide for the life of him whether to die of excitement or despair. He realised what a one-eyed view of Christianity and 'civilisation' he'd had all his life, and that now there'd never be world enough and time to make good the deficiencies in his knowledge.

We went to lunch. I was in my travel clothes, wearing a little gold cross (£1, and a bargain, from the repository of Christ Church, Eltham) on the lapel of my jacket. David noticed it:

'Are you a Roman Catholic?'

'Yes.'

'We believe the same things then.'

Actually I bought the cross out of respect for Pope Benedict's wish that Christians should be prepared to identify themselves in public at a time when those who dislike 'religion' want them to be as invisible as possible. It's intended as a signal to non-believers, and no doubt it is that, but most of the reactions I've had have been from fellow-Christians – Orthodox David is the latest – and all of them have been joyful recognitions.

Paul Clark  
18 June 2011



**Archdiocese of Southwark Christian Unity Commission  
Study Day on Spiritual Ecumenism  
The Friars, Aylesford, 7 May 2011**

**SPIRITUAL ECUMENISM AND PRAYER II  
Sister Mary John Marshall, OSB**

If we are intent in finding the way to unity that God wills for us we have to acknowledge that prayer must occupy the first place. There you have a pious platitude, maybe what you'd expect from a nun! But what do we understand by prayer? We may think of it as asking God for mercy, healing, new insight, very often a changed situation from that which prevails. Such an understanding is obviously drawn from the Bible, the gospels and from Christian life and practice. But the New Testament goes on to present us with such injunctions as "Pray without ceasing". What are we to make of this? It was just this challenge that has impelled many to leave all and embrace monastic life, as far back as we can discover as the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of course monks and nuns are a tiny minority of Christians and many of us fail miserably in our realization of this imperative. But that doesn't make it go away. So what is prayer?

The gospels quietly and sparsely reveal Jesus as a man of prayer, yet a man of prayer that in no way excludes a man of immense, dynamic action. As each gospel has its own perspective we can see in each a different nuance in what is revealed by Jesus' prayer. The Gospel of Luke suggests that the disciples were intrigued by observing Jesus at prayer and so make their specific request: "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples." Jesus' response is the 'Our Father' and he follows it on with teaching about persistence in prayer, really urgent, clamorous insistence. He makes it clear that this is not because the Father is unwilling to give what we ask, but because we need to be wholehearted in praying, so focused on our need and expectant of the Father's generosity in fulfilling it that we can recognize

the often surprising gift when it comes. The gift may well be none other than the Holy Spirit himself. And if we are to receive him, and wholeheartedly welcome him, we shall be changed. Prayer can be a risky business. We may find its effects invading our comfort zones and questioning our self-determination. I was warned years ago: “Never pray for anyone or anything unless you are prepared to be part of the answer.”

So what is prayer? I’ve sought to explore that question for most of my life. As I’ve come to understand it so far, it includes the awakening of our consciousness of being who we really are, children of God, children in relationship with God who are trying to allow that relationship to be the governing principle of their life. Most of us at some point come to a recognition that we are the prodigal son in a far country from home, from the intimacy that was once ours and which we have repudiated and squandered. We recognize too that we are the self-righteous elder brother who is actually in an even farther country from his father, so distant is he from the father’s generous, out-pouring love.

All this and more may well impinge on our awareness when we try to pray, along with the nagging sense that we’re talking into the air. So once more we too ask our Lord: “Teach us to pray”, and receive an answer that draws us into the power and reality of his own prayer. Our community has recently been listening to recordings of teaching on prayer given by our Archbishop just two years ago. He began by urging his hearers to let Jesus’ prayer happen in you. Whenever we say “Our Father” we find ourselves in his place, standing where he stands. He is offering to share with us his relationship to the Father and so secure us as sons and daughters of God and thus brothers and sisters. Our Father. Sometimes it’s interesting to listen to the Our Father as though Jesus alone were praying it. It can throw new light on how we pray it. The Archbishop went through the various petitions,

stressing especially the requirement of forgiving that we might receive God's forgiveness and went on to examine three early commentators on the Lord's Prayer who were insistent on this requirement. Origen asserted the need to be at peace with others in order to pray at all. St. Gregory of Nyssa remarked that if people prayed seriously they would be reconciled. Prayer heals relations.

This has been a long introduction into our subject of spiritual ecumenism and prayer, but I trust one that's not irrelevant. If it is true that prayer heals relations, then it is all the more imperative that divided Christians engage in it, and together. How to go about it? There are of course the services during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and these are of value, but afterwards we can tend to return to our own safe ghettos and pray for unity (if at all) on our own or with our own. So I might suggest engaging in the risks of seeking out other Christians to form prayer cells that can meet at regular intervals to pray and to study and to share faith and experiences and fun with one another. Each could bring short readings from his/her own tradition to offer the experience each has been nurtured by and see how it might be received. There could be quite considerable opening of minds and hearts as we try to receive and understand where others come from.

Then there are certainly other ways of meeting that can lead to prayer such as singing together the wonderful chants from the brothers of Taizé. The fact of their harmonization can subtly teach something about unity in diversity; the necessity of other parts for the full richness that can in however small a measure reflect the richness of God. My own embryonic investigations into the wide area of interfaith dialogue suggest that shared silence can be very fruitful in deepening an encounter with others who might seem altogether 'other', where any sharing of things precious to

me might be misinterpreted or dismissed or that I might unwittingly put my foot on sensitivities that would only reinforce existing prejudices and divisions. Yet silence, however uncomfortable it may be at first can be immensely fruitful and bonding as together we wait upon the One whom we know as God. Another area of spiritual sharing can be through pilgrimages or engaging in walking a labyrinth together with all its slow turnings in and out and eventually finding ourselves meeting in the centre.

But to return to the subject of *lectio divina*. This is clearly an area especially dear to monks and nuns and one that brings us all back to Scripture which, with the Eucharist and liturgy provides the bedrock of our life. Here I shall give you seven principles of *lectio* as outlined by Fr. Michael Casey, O.S.C.O.

*Lectio divina* is aimed not at confirming and reinforcing our individual approach to life, but at breaking into our subjective world and enriching it from the outside, delivering us from the prejudices and limitations of closed convictions and ideology and exposing our lives to the fullness of revelation and not simply to that part which presently appeals to us.

*Lectio divina* is a long-term activity. It is not a source of immediate gratification as much as general provisioning for life. Fidelity and constancy are the most valuable adjuncts to such reading.

*Lectio divina* is connected with our personal sense of vocation. The aim of our reading is to hear the call of God clearly and concretely in our present situation.

*Lectio divina* applies the Word of God to our own life-situation, allowing revelation and experience to overlap.

There is a certain purposelessness or gratuity about *lectio divina* which is reflected in the leisure and peace which surround it. *Lectio divina* is done in such a way that it may be punctuated by

prayer. Reading is not merely an “inner” exercise. As far as possible our whole body should participate in our *lectio divina*. When something is encountered in our *lectio divina* which particularly speaks to us we should endeavour to retain it in our memory lest any of its savour escape us.

(Quoted from *The Undivided Heart: The Western Monastic Approach to Contemplation*, by Dom Michael Casey, OSCO, St. Bede’s Publications, 1994, with permission from the author.)

As I mentioned this morning, *lectio* is primarily personal prayer as the above principles indicate. Yet it can offer scope for sharing with Christians of other traditions whose insights may well be of value in opening the way to receiving God’s gift of unity. Very particularly, a beginning of shared *lectio* might be the great prayer of consecration of Jesus himself in John 17. This prayer is fathomless as is the Our Father and one can begin to find correspondences between the two. There is the glorification of God’s Name, his revealed character, which in the biblical conception of worship begins all prayer in adoring acknowledgement. Then there is expressed the desire that God’s name be hallowed for his work in creation and redemption. Then there comes the challenge to respond to that revelation by co-operating with God’s holy purpose or rule, involving entire surrender to God’s holy will. The service of his kingdom must involve sacrifice; the self-emptying that we see in our Lord’s incarnation and passion, on earth as in heaven. The gift of our daily bread is literally that, not only for me and you but equally for all God’s creation; for the sustaining of our earthly as for our spiritual life. And Jesus prays in the High-Priestly prayer that we may be one, so living the Father’s forgiveness of us that we too fully forgive the sins of others against us, and that the Father may keep us from the evil one. It’s a huge country to explore.

**In conclusion**, I'd like to read a passage written by Archbishop William Temple in the 1930's, commenting on John 17:

*The unity of the Church is precious not only for its utility in strengthening the Church as an evangelistic agent. It is itself in principle the consummation to which all history moves. The purpose of God in creation was, and is, to fashion a fellowship of free spirits knit together by a love of God – or, as St. Paul expresses it, to “sum up all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10). The agent of that purpose is the Church, which is therefore called the Body of Christ, through the activity and self-edifying of which Christ Himself is “fulfilled” ... The unity of the Church is something much more than the unity of ecclesiastical structure, though it cannot be complete without this. It is the love of God in Christ possessing the hearts of men so as to unite them in itself – as the Father and the Son are united in that love of Each for Each which is the Holy Spirit. The unity which the Lord prays that His disciples may enjoy is that which is eternally characteristic of the Tri-une God. It is therefore something much more than a means to any end – even though that end be the evangelization of the world; it is itself the one worthy end of all human aspiration; it is the life of heaven. For His prayer is not only that they may be one; it is that they may be one as we.*

Quoted from *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, II,  
by William Temple, Macmillan & Co., 1940.

*Grateful thanks to Sr Mary John for generously  
allowing TiC to reproduce the two talks.*

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE**

The second part of a paper presented at

The Catholic Evidence Guild Inter-Guild Conference, 1975 by

Una Ratcliff

We will find in the New Testament a more consistent use of the term ‘the Holy Spirit’; nevertheless, this was in the Old Testament too. In Psalm 51:11, ‘Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me’; in Wisdom 9:17, ‘Who has learned thy counsel, unless thou hast given wisdom and sent thy holy spirit from on high?’; in Isaiah 63:11, ‘Where is he who put in the midst of them his holy spirit?’; and more significantly in Isaiah 63:10, ‘But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit’, where the expression almost suggests a Person – you don’t grieve a thing; and it is paralleled in St Paul: ‘Do not grieve the Holy Spirit’.

It all adds up to a wonderful preparation for the fuller revelation and, more powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament to which we Will now turn.

Just as we saw in the Old, so in the New Testament we find the Spirit coming on people; they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and again, something special happens. The most important and, of course, utterly unique occasion was the Annunciation, when the angel said to Mary: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and therefore the child to be born will be called holy.’ St Matthew tells us of Mary: ‘She was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit and Joseph is not to be afraid because that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’ Here we have Mary’s unique relationship with the Spirit: she is the spouse of the Spirit, and his action on her prepares her to give birth to THE WORD – that is, God the Son.

In the first few chapters of St Luke there are other instances. It was said of John the Baptist: ‘he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.’

Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she uttered her prophetic words: ‘Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied and he said his *Benedictus*.

It was said of Simeon: ‘the Holy Spirit was upon him.’ and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ, and he uttered his prophetic message, his *Nunc Dimittis* prayer, We might note too, the presence of Anna, described as a prophetess, which we know means the action of the Spirit on her. We see the familiar accompaniment of prophecy!

Then we have the supremely important occasion of the Baptism of Our Lord. There is the glorious manifestation of the Trinity – the voice of the Father: ‘This is my beloved Son’; the Son – Our Lord Himself; and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a dove – the bird image again. Jesus Himself was anointed with the power of the Spirit and there is the reminder by John the Baptist that Jesus is the one who is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Then St Luke tells us: ‘Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness tempted by the devil.’ He was led by the Spirit to encounter and to resist the evil ones this is an important preparation for his ministry in the power of the Spirit of casting out devils, as He said: ‘If I by the finger – or the Spirit of God cast out demons then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.’



After the temptations, Luke tells us: ‘Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee’ – all his future actions were done in the power of the Spirit. He came to Nazareth and read the text from Isaiah: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor’, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”, a clear claim by Jesus that he is the Messiah anointed by the Spirit.

But apart from these incidents, throughout the rest of the Gospels, we do not read of the Spirit coming on people: now that the ministry of Jesus has begun and is carried on in the Spirit, there is a series of promises about the future coming of the Spirit. The only exception to this statement is the time when the Spirit was received by the Apostles after the Resurrection, to give them power to forgive sins.

To consider the promise of the Spirit, let us go to John 7: 39: ‘On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed: “If anyone thirst let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said: ‘Out Of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’ .”’ And St John comments: ‘Now this he said about the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive for as yet, the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus had not been glorified.’

It is a wonderful passage, and I think it is very helpful, as I was helped to do, to see this in the context of the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, to see the rich significance of Our Lord’s words. It was on the great day – the day of the great Hosanna. One group had gone with the priests to the pool of Siloam to fetch a pitcher of water – only about a couple of pints; this was brought to the altar of sacrifice and joined with the wine there and was poured out in two funnels so that it fell to the base of the altar. Then there were prayers for the outpouring of the Spirit in fulfilment of God’s promise – as we saw in Isaiah this was associated with the

Messiah – and there was the notion of salvation coupled with this expectation; there were the Hallel psalms of praise chanted out with the continual rousing “Praise the Lord” response coming from this enormous congregation of about a half million people, and it is then that Our Lord proclaims: ‘If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink’, and this he said of the Spirit.

And we need to link this with the other Isaiah passage: ‘I will pour water on the thirsty land’ which I quoted, and with Isaiah: ‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation’ and with Our Lord’s words to the woman at the well of Samaria: ‘Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him all become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’

I’ll summarize briefly the other promises about the Spirit. The Apostles are told by Jesus not to worry about what to say when they are brought to trial, ‘for it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you’; the ‘the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say’; ‘But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you’.

And from St John, Chapters 14-16 we find Our Lord says: ‘And I will pray the Father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth’: ‘But when the Counsellor comes, whom I will send you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me’; ‘But when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth’; ‘He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement’; ‘He will glorify me’; ‘for He will take what is Mine and will declare it to you’ – the

abiding presence, the truth, the guidance of the Spirit and something of the theology of the Spirit – his procession from the Father and Son.

This Spirit is promised to all. In Luke 11, we have the occasion where Our Lord shows how a human father does what is best for his children, and concludes: ‘how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.’

And so we come on to the Acts of the Apostles, where at the very beginning there is a very strong sense of anticipation about the coming of the Spirit. Our Lord, told his disciples ‘before many days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’ using the phrase we heard from John the Baptist; before many days – not long to wait; and again Our Lord promised: ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses.’ The Apostles we are told: devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.’

And then – Pentecost: ‘When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place; and suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.’

There we are – all the longing for, all the eager expectation, all the promises fulfilled: the breath of the Spirit blew strongly, the tongues of fire flame out, they were all filled with the Spirit – the Apostles, the women, Our Lady, filled with the Spirit; they spoke in tongues: the Apostles, the women, Our Lady spoke in tongues. Could we now be surprised that the sign of the coming of the Spirit was a word gift – the gift of tongues, which enabled them to ‘tell the mighty works of God’. And St Peter interprets

all this – explains this as the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy: ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh ... .’ Peter preaches; they are cut to the heart; he tells them: ‘repent, be baptized and you shall receive the gift of the Spirit.’ And three thousand souls were baptized.

The power to be witnesses, promised by Our Lord was fulfilled: from Acts 4, after they had prayed, prayed so much that the house shook: ‘they were all filled, with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.’

We see this throughout the Acts of the Apostles, individuals and groups of people receive and are filled with the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was filled with the Holy Spirit and Faith; Stephen, before his martyrdom was described as ‘filled with the Spirit, gazing into Heaven’; St Peter; St Paul; the seven deacons, all filled with the Spirit. Groups of people – a group of the Gentiles – pagans filled with the Spirit. After Peter’s vision he was addressing Cornelius and a group of pagans when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues. Peter learned that the Spirit was to be universally given, even to the pagans.

Then there was the group of disciples at Ephesus. St Paul went to Ephesus and there found a group of about a dozen disciples who had only been baptized in the baptism of John. ‘Did you receive the Spirit?’ he asked; they hadn’t even so much as heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul laid his hands on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. The word gift of tongues and prophecy!

And prophecy continued. There was the prophet Agabus who foretold that Paul would be bound at Jerusalem, and claimed: ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit.’ The four daughters of Philip were prophetesses. At the Council of Jerusalem the decree was prefaced by ‘It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ –

a clear indication of their awareness that the Holy Spirit was acting upon them.

And throughout the Acts we see power accompanying the spreading of the Word; the power of miracles and healings. One could bring up many examples here. Dorcas and Eutychus raised to life; the sick healed, all the sick on the Island of Malta were healed when Paul went there. Aeneas, the paralytic healed; the father of Publius healed of a fever; when Philip went to Samaria there were healings and casting out of devils. The power of the Spirit accompanying the proclamation of the Word. These are the prominent accompaniments throughout the Acts; the power, the witnessing, the tongues, the prophecies.

And so we come to St Paul who tells us: 'We serve not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit'; 'the Spirit gives life.' What does this new life in the Spirit mean to St Paul? It means the deep realization and experience of the indwelling and activity of the Holy Spirit within the souls of men. This to my mind is St Paul's primary contribution to the Spirit in the Bible – the insight he gives of the interior action of the Spirit on the soul, as well as the exterior manifestations we've been considering.

The Spirit is the sanctifier, the guarantee of our heavenly inheritance; the Spirit of love and of life, of unity and peace, of hope and joy, of freedom; the Spirit who reveals and instructs, the Spirit who gives power and gifts to build up the Body of Christ, to enable them to witness to the new revelation of Jesus Christ who is Lord, who has conquered sin and death and who has redeemed us. The Spirit who dwells in us is the 'Spirit who searches everything, even the depths of God.' All this is set forth in St Paul with great richness and love; we can only look briefly at some of these treasures.

The Spirit dwells in us: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' Paul asked the Corinthians.

It is the Spirit within us who leads us to recognize the

sublime truth that we are children of God. ‘When we cry “Abba, Father”, it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.’ and we can link this with St Paul saying to the Corinthians: ‘no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Spirit.’ There is a profound understanding expressed here of the way in which the Holy Spirit brings us to the appreciation of our relationship with God – with the Father and the Son; it is the Spirit who helps us to have that relationship deepened through prayer: ‘The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.’ and again: ‘the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.’

No wonder St Paul exhorts us to ‘pray at all times in the Spirit’, a phrase repeated incidentally, in the Epistle of Jude: ‘Pray in the Spirit.’ No wonder St Paul tells us to ‘Be aglow with the Spirit’. One way the Holy Spirit helped St Paul in prayer was through the gift of tongues. St Paul explains that: ‘one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men, but to God; for no one understands him but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.’ A wonderful thought – ‘he utters mysteries in the Spirit.’ So St Paul is explaining the use of tongues as a private prayer gift. ‘He who speaks in a tongue is speaking to God’; it is for his own edification rather than for the building up of the community. Prophecy is for the building up of the community, so St Paul puts that gift above tongues at a community meeting. If tongues are used publicly one should pray for an interpretation – another gift of the Spirit. St Paul says: ‘I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all’ and ‘Do not forbid speaking in tongues’, and we noted earlier his words: ‘Now I want you all to speak in tongues and even more to prophesy’. Prophecy is for the ‘up-building and encouragement and consolation’ of the community.

St Paul talks about the gifts of the Spirit, but we can never separate the Giver from the gift. Two people might give a gift to each other and have no further contact, but the Spirit always has

contact with the recipients of His gifts. He is there as the gifts are being used and they can only operate by His power.

To the Corinthians, St Paul speaks of the varieties of gifts of the Spirit – the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, the ability to distinguish between spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

These wonderful gifts of the Spirit are given through the power of the Spirit and He gives, as I said before, the ‘after-care’, and helps us to understand them. We have received the Spirit from God, St Paul says ‘that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.’

Finally, I’ll point to the renewing action of the Spirit. To Titus St Paul said that we are saved ‘by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.’

Again, he tells us that we all ‘are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.’ We are being changed! Such is the wonderful renewing action which the Spirit effects. And this Spirit is the Spirit of life and love – primarily of love. St Paul tells the Galatians: ‘If you live by the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit.’ And if we live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit, we will show forth the fruits of the Spirit – the first of which is Love. Love, joy, peace, patience and so on – these are the fruits of the Spirit of Love ‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit’, as St Paul told the Romans.

As we come to the end of this glimpse of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, we pray that this same Holy Spirit of love will fill our hearts with His love, will give us His gifts; that this Holy Spirit will brood over this Conference with warm breast and with bright wings and will give us His ‘dearest freshness deep down in our hearts’.

Una Ratcliff

