

PENTECOST VIGIL ~ THURSDAY

Come Holy Spirit and fill the Hearts of your Faithful!



Fulfil for us your gracious promise, O Lord, we pray, so that by his coming the Holy Spirit may make us witnesses before the world to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

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

*Thou who art called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction and true love.*

Joel 3: 1-5

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”

As I settle to pray, I ask that the Holy Spirit may open me to God's Word. Joel is one of the Minor Prophets found towards the end of the Old testament. We know little about him, but we can deduce from his writing that he was ministering after the exile around 400BC. His work is prompted by a plague of locusts which devastate the land. Joel interprets this as a divine visitation, the 'Day of the Lord', and he calls on the people to repent. Joel sees the people's prayer answered with the out pouring of God's spirit. In the past, the Spirit was given for a particular mission, to prophets, leaders, etc., but now in Joel's vision, it is given to all: *'Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on your servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit.'* The Spirit is given to all the people, so that they may know the Lord and follow his commands. As in Joel's vision, on Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the coming of God's Spirit on all peoples. The Spirit not only teaches us about God, but leads us into the mystery of God's love. The Spirit enables us to share in God's life. This is an invitation made to all. Let us joyfully share this good news with all, especially those who have forgotten God or have drawn distant from him.

All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ send your Holy Spirit upon us to be our helper and guide. Give us the spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill us with the spirit of wonder and awe in your presence. Amen.

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St Cyril of Alexandria ~ On St John's Gospel

“If I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you”

Everything has been accomplished which remained to be done on earth; but it still remained necessary that we should share and participate in the divine nature of the Word - that is, that we should put away our life and be utterly transformed and launched on a new way of holy living. Now this could not be brought about except by a sharing and a participation in the Holy Spirit.

The most suitable and appropriate time for the sending of the Holy Spirit and his descent upon us was the time which followed immediately upon the departure of Christ our Saviour from our midst.

For I think it is true to say that, while Christ was still present in bodily form among those who believed in him, he was revealed to them as one who conferred every good gift; but since the time and the need were now calling him to be carried up to his Father in heaven, it was necessary for him to be present through the Spirit with those who worshipped him, and to dwell in our hearts through faith. Having him within us in this way, we would be able to cry out in confidence: 'ABBA! Father!', and to make peaceful progress towards every virtue; we would prove powerful and invincible against the wiles of the devil and the attacks of men, for we would possess the Spirit whose power has no limit.

It is easy to prove from the Old and New Testaments that the Spirit changes the character of those among whom he comes to dwell, and transforms their life. The

holy man Samuel, when speaking to Saul, said: 'The Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you will be turned into another man.' Saint Paul said: 'We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same likeness from one degree of glory to another; and this comes from the Lord, the Spirit; for the Lord is the Spirit.

You can see, then, that the Spirit re-creates, so to speak, in a new pattern those among whom he is seen to dwell. He readily replaces their desire to think earthly thoughts with the desire to fix their gaze only on the things of heaven; he changes their unmanly cowardice into the spirit of courage. We can certainly see that the disciples experienced this: the Spirit became their armour, so that they did not yield to the attacks of their persecutors but held fast to the love of Christ.

And so the truth of our Saviour's words can be seen: 'It is to your advantage that I go away to heaven.' For that was the time for the descent of the Spirit.

