



PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE BISHOP  
to be read in all churches and chapels of the Diocese of Portsmouth  
on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2013, The Most Holy Trinity

### THE THIRD PERSON

Dear Christian Disciples,

In this fourth Pastoral Letter for the Year of Faith, I wish to talk about something disturbing. But let me first wish you today, Trinity Sunday, a Happy Feastday! During these last weeks, we have celebrated the Lord's Death and His glorious Resurrection, which brings us the forgiveness of sins, the promise of immortality and the 'grace' or energy to carry the cross of sickness, suffering and sorrow. We have also been given a new pope, Francis, whom we commend to the Lord in prayer. During this time too, in the diocese we have begun a process of restructuring, although I will say more about that next time.

For today, I want to discuss the often-neglected Third Article of the Creed: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver.<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to imagine this mysterious Third Person of the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit never speaks directly<sup>2</sup>; we know Him only through His movements<sup>3</sup>. The Bible paints a disturbing picture: He is fire, wind, noise, a rush of water, cloud and light, a dove, a hand, oil and breath, even a finger.<sup>4</sup> He blows where He wills.<sup>5</sup> He convicts people of sin.<sup>6</sup> He overturns complacency, disrupting our plans, taking us where we would not go. Yet the Spirit is also a Paraclete and Comforter,<sup>7</sup> God's forgiveness and healing, pleasant coolness in the heat,<sup>8</sup> a 'frisson' or sense of awe that sets the hairs on our necks tingling, yet filling our hearts with the warmth of God's love. Indeed, His activity can be known for certain only by twelve fruits: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity.<sup>9</sup>

Who is this Holy Spirit? What is He like? The Father always works in the world through His two hands,<sup>10</sup> the Son and the Spirit, and They are inseparable<sup>11</sup>; as St. Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Eastern fathers, explains, there is no distance whatsoever between Them<sup>12</sup>. Yet in history, the Spirit was the First Person to be revealed, hovering over the waters<sup>13</sup>, creating a world teeming with life and individuality. Then, through Israel and the prophets, the Spirit prepared the world for the coming of the Second Person, God the Son, in the fullness of time.<sup>14</sup> But now, in these last days, the Spirit is preparing us for a new revelation at the end-time, the revelation of the Father, Whom we shall see as He is<sup>15</sup>. This is why, even at this moment, the Spirit is sowing seeds of the Word<sup>16</sup>. He is at work in the heart of every child, woman and man, wooing them into communion with Christ and His Church,<sup>17</sup> and in the Mass and the sacraments, blending them into unity<sup>18</sup>, making them bear fruit<sup>19</sup> and preparing them for the *vitam venturi saeculi*, the life of the world to come.

Let me now ask you a question: When you pray, to Whom do you pray? In the Liturgy we mostly pray to God the Father. At other times, particularly in Eucharistic Adoration, we pray to God the Son, to Jesus our Lord and Master. But how often do you pray to God the Holy Spirit? The Spirit offers seven gifts to help us, three of knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and four for action: courage, counsel, piety and fear of the Lord.<sup>20</sup> When we are lonely or in doubt, when we have a meeting or need to make an important decision, where there's discord and division, even when we pick up the phone or answer the door, we should pray to the Holy Spirit. As we make progress in the spiritual life, we develop a different relationship with each Person of the Trinity, as the Spirit leads us more deeply into the life, laughter and happiness of the Godhead. Like tuning a radio, the Spirit unites our petitions with the prayer of Jesus, placing them before the Father, who finds them - like us - irresistible.<sup>21</sup>

During these weeks after Pentecost, I want to encourage everyone in the diocese to pray, more often every day, to the Holy Spirit and on weekdays occasionally to offer a Votive Mass. He will change your life. He will smash any pride or hardness of heart. He will fill you with what is so often lacking in our world today, in the mainstream media, the internet, in our parishes and even our own lives: love. Let me make some suggestions. Every morning, pray: 'Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful; enkindle in us the fire of your love'.<sup>22</sup> Let every parish meeting and every school day begin with that prayer and a moment's silence for the Spirit to plough up our dispositions. Try not to judge others; never speak uncharitably, even of public figures; resist the motivations of the devil and the evil spirits<sup>23</sup>; and take care when on-line. Study in the Catechism, each day in turn, one of the fruits of the Spirit. Again, after Mass, why not speak to someone you don't know? Or extend the hand of reconciliation to one you have fallen out with?

One last thing. The Spirit forms the Church and sends her out on mission<sup>24</sup>. I would like to ask every parish and school and every individual member of the Church, to engage in new evangelisation with a special concern for justice, peace and social responsibility. As Catholics, we are called to defend and promote the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, with care for the environment and a willingness, in our affluent Western culture, to adopt a simpler life-style. Most of us would readily wish to alleviate poverty in

other parts of the world and in this the people of the Diocese of Portsmouth are notably generous. But let us not overlook the various forms of deprivation in our own communities<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, I would like to invite every Catholic to consider tithing, that is, donating 10% of your time and talents to Christ's service, especially the care of the needy.<sup>26</sup> It would be good if every Pastoral Area engaged in local works of charitable assistance, thus giving witness that the Jesus we love in the Eucharist is the Jesus we love in the poor.<sup>27</sup>

To conclude. In this Year of Faith, at the end of the month of May, let us again turn to Mary, who conceived the Son of the Father by the power of the Spirit. We pray for Queen and country, as we recall next week the 60th anniversary of her Majesty's Coronation. We ask Mary's prayers too for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit on our land, so that many more will come to know, serve and love Jesus Christ, whose Heart in the Eucharist, pierced by a lance, burns limitlessly with love for us.

Have a good day! May the Triune God bless you all.

In Corde Iesu  
+ Philip  
Bishop of Portsmouth

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the Church's teaching about the Holy Spirit, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) 683f.

<sup>2</sup> John 16: 13

<sup>3</sup> CCC 687

<sup>4</sup> 'digitus paternae dexteræ' from the hymn at Vespers for Easter season after the Ascension 'Veni Creator Spiritus'; cf. Lk 11: 20, Ex 31: 15 and 2 Cor 3: 3. For an account of these other symbols and their Scriptural references, see CCC 694-701.

<sup>5</sup> Jn 3: 8

<sup>6</sup> Jn 16: 8. Cf. John Paul II *Dominum et Vivificantem* (London, CTS: 1986) 42-45

<sup>7</sup> *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London, CTS: 2006) 138

<sup>8</sup> *Veni Sancte Spiritus* Sequence for Pentecost Sunday, attributed to Pope Innocent III (d. 1216)

<sup>9</sup> CCC 1832; cf. Gal 5: 22-23

<sup>10</sup> St. Irenaeus *Adv. haereses* 2, 30, 9; 4, 20, I: PG 7/1, 822, 1032

<sup>11</sup> "Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church's faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him" CCC 689.

<sup>12</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa *De Spiritu Sancto* 45: PG 45, 1321A-B

<sup>13</sup> Gen 1: 2

<sup>14</sup> Cf. CCC 719

<sup>15</sup> 1 Jn 3: 1-3. Cf. Ps 17: 15; 1 Cor 13: 12 and 2 Cor 3: 18. See also optional memento for the dead in Eucharistic Prayer III.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* (London, CTS: 1990) 28-29

<sup>17</sup> Cf. John Paul II *Dominum et Vivificantem* 53

<sup>18</sup> "All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us, . . . and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity" St. Cyril of Alexandria *In Io. Ev.* 11, 11: PG 74, 561

<sup>19</sup> Jn 15: 8

<sup>20</sup> "The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations" CCC 1831

<sup>21</sup> Cf. CCC 2670-2673

<sup>22</sup> Antiphon at the Magnificat, Pentecost Sunday, Evening Prayer I. Translation here is from *Everyday Catholic Prayers* (London, CTS: 2010 [LF 47])

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<sup>23</sup> "When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things " Gal 5: 19-21.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* 20-30 'Chapter 3 'The Holy Spirit: Principal Agent of Mission''

<sup>25</sup> Recently, for instance, the Health and Environment Committee of the London Assembly issued a report 'A Zero Hunger City:Tackling Food Poverty in London' (available from the GLA, City Hall, SE1 2LA) which speaks of a growing crisis of hunger amongst the urban poor. 34000 people p.a. in the capital are currently reliant upon food banks. I suspect that this dire situation is mirrored in the urban centres of our own diocese.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Code of Canon Law 222: 1-2. In the Old Testament tithing was practised extensively as laid down in Lev 27: 30-32. Its origin was in Gen 28: 20-22 when Jacob, as part of the covenant with the Lord, vowed to give a tithe of all he received in the Promised Land.

<sup>27</sup> In a Message to young people, Pope John Paul II once wrote: "Dear friends, if you learn to discover Jesus in the Eucharist, you will also know how to discover him in your brothers and sisters, particularly in the very poor. The Eucharist received with love and adored with fervour becomes a school of freedom and charity in order to fulfil the commandment to love. Jesus speaks to us in the wonderful language of the gift of self and of love so great as to give our own life for it. Is that an easy thing? You know very well that it is not! It is not easy to forget our self, but if we do, it draws us away from possessive and narcissistic love and opens us up to the joy of a love that is self-giving. This Eucharistic school of freedom and charity teaches us to overcome superficial emotions in order to be rooted firmly in what is true and good; it frees us from self-attachment in order to open ourselves to others. It teaches us to make the transition from an affective love to an effective love. For love is not merely a feeling; it is an act of will that consists of preferring, in a constant manner, the good of others to the good of oneself: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). It is with such inner freedom and such burning charity that Jesus teaches us to find him in others, first of all in the disfigured face of the poor. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta loved to distribute her "visiting card" on which were written the words: "The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace". This is the way to meet Christ. Go out to meet all of human suffering spurred on by your generosity and with the love that God instils in your hearts by means of the Holy Spirit: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). The world is in urgent need of a great prophetic sign of fraternal charity! It is not enough to "speak" of Jesus. We must also let him be "seen" somehow through the eloquent witness of our own life" (John Paul II *Message for the 19th World Youth Day*, 4 April 2004 - on-line at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)).