

*Service for Sunday 17 May 2020 from Revd Pauline Crispin*

***(Before the service, you might like to have a mirror nearby).***

**Spirit of truth, come close to us.  
Unite us into the body of Christ.  
Enable us to worship God in Spirit and in truth.  
Help us to support and encourage each other.  
Help us to love as we are loved.  
Spirit of truth, come and abide in us. Amen.**

*Sing or read:*

- 1 Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing ;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.
- 2 O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming ;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.
- 3 Let holy charity  
mine outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become mine inner clothing ;  
true lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part,  
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
- 4 And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the power of human telling ;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (*d.* 1434)

*translated by* Richard Frederick Littledale (1833–1890)

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Lord God, you must weep day by day,  
for the unacknowledged love you pour on us.  
In this moment, help us to face our mistakes,  
and to acknowledge the things we have failed to do.  
Amend our spirits, so that we may feel your love again  
and get ready to make the right choices  
to live in your loving freedom. **Amen.**

John 14:15-21 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

Some of you may know this poem: The Wind, by Christina Rossetti

Who has seen the wind?

Neither I nor you.

But when the leaves hang trembling,

The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I.

But when the trees bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by.

We cannot see the wind by we see the effects that it has. Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit? Believe me that is not a trick question. The closest we get in the Bible are descriptions God's Spirit as water. For example Isaiah 44:3 *'For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring.'* John 4:14 *but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."* Or of tongues of flame (Acts 2:3) or a freely blowing breeze (John 3).

I believe that is what makes talking about the Holy Spirit so difficult. We don't know what the Spirit looks like.....But do we? In this week's lesson we get two extremely helpful clues that, jointly, offer a fairly good picture of what the Holy Spirit looks like.

Firstly, the Holy Spirit looks like an Advocate, a supporter, one who stands up for you when you need it; one who speaks on your behalf, one who offers you help, takes your side, and will not ever leave you while you are in need.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit looks like Christ. Jesus goes on to say, The Spirit, will abide with us. Just as Jesus the Word made flesh has abided with us. If you read on in John's gospel to verse 25 you will note that the Spirit is sent in Jesus' name and reminds us of what he taught. In a very real way, the Spirit mediates Jesus presence and helps to keep his promise that he will not leave us and will come to us.

In short, Holy Spirit is an advocate that looks a lot like Jesus; which means that we have essentially seen the Spirit lots of times. Anytime, in fact, somebody stands up for another. Anytime someone acts like Jesus. Anytime a person bears the love of Christ to another, then we have seen the Holy Spirit.

No wonder, then, Jesus says, "you know him." As it turns out, the Holy Spirit at one time or another has undoubtedly looked a lot like you, or even like me, and definitely a lot like each and all of us when we do these things I have just mentioned. When we are doing God's will and serving His Kingdom.

So the Holy Spirit looks a lot like you when you stand up for others, when you try to be more like Jesus, and bear Christ's love into the world. I invite you to look into the mirror, look in it and see the Holy Spirit in the world.

Reflect on where you have seen the Holy Spirit in the world this week, either through the good you have been blessed to do for others or the good you have been blessed to accept from others. If you cannot recall anything from this past week, then **'BE ALERT'** in this coming week (*as the government has advised us all to be!*) and look out for those 'closest to Christ' moments i.e. At what moment in the week did you feel closest to Christ?

The work and presence of the Holy Spirit is in the world; it is at work in you and through you. What is the Holy Spirit going to look like to you and through you, in the days ahead?

**Loving God, you choose to love me and accept me as I am. By this amazing relationship, I am made whole. You have listened to me; you have heard me. Amen.**

*Sing or read*

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.  
Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.  
Break me, melt me,  
mould me, fill me.  
Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

Daniel Iverson (1890–1977) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 395

Dear Lord, we bring to you in prayer,  
those who do not know you and your love;  
those who have turned away from you;  
those who struggle to accept you;  
those who refuse to listen.  
May your love touch them, **and transform their lives.**

Lord, we bring to you in prayer,  
those who need parental love;  
those who are alone;  
those who are abused;  
those who are neglected.  
May your love touch them, **and transform their lives.**

Lord, we hold in prayer those who seek the truth;  
those who work in the justice system;  
those who campaign and advocate on behalf of the voiceless.  
May your love touch them, **and transform their lives.**

**May we show the power and presence of your love in our church, our community and our world for Jesus' sake. Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

- 1 Breathe on me, Breath of God ;  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.
- 2 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will one will,  
to do and to endure.
- 3 Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,  
until this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.
- 4 Breathe on me, Breath of God ;  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life  
of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch (1835–1889)

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**I am your child, O God:  
Help me always to show love,  
and fill me with the Spirit of truth. Amen.**

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen