

COME HOLY SPIRIT, COME...

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THE YEAR OF GRACE inaugurated by the Australian Episcopal Conference has surely been an event of the Spirit in our land. Extending from Pentecost 2012 until Pentecost 2013, it has indeed become a 'slow motion retreat' for Australian Catholics to 'start afresh from Christ'. Under the impulse of the Spirit it has enabled us to 'contemplate the face of Christ' revealed in mysterious and unexpected ways in whatever experiences comprise the context of one's daily life. Throughout our dioceses, parishes, schools, among individuals and 'wherever two or three have gathered in Christ's name', we have been invited to renew our faith personally and to take up the challenge of the Gospel to 'Go out to all the world and tell the Good News' (Mark 16:15).

This reflection will gather together certain aspects of our understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in our midst—aspects to be held in our collective memory beyond the immediacy of the Church's liturgical feast of Pentecost as we continue to pray:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your Faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen

The 'Great South Land of the Spirit': an Australian connection?

It was at sunrise on Pentecost Sunday, May 14th in the year 1606 that the Portugese mariner-adventurer-explorer-missionary, Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, claimed what was long imagined to exist as *Terra Austrialis Incognita*, as *Terra Austrialis del Espiritu Santo*, the South Land of the Holy Spirit. Following solemn Mass celebrated by Franciscan friars who

were among de Quiros' crew of sailors and soldiers, rousing shouts of 'Long live the faith of Christ!' reverberated as rockets and firewheels were discharged in jubilation. James McAuley's poem, *Captain Quiros*, captures the sincere hope expressed in de Quiros' last will and testament that this South Land would be graced 'with 'braziers of love' and 'pots and pans of piety and pity', whence are savoured the fruits of justice...'¹ And so may it be...Although cartographers may question the precise site of landfall of de Quiros' daring expedition on the eve of Pentecost, conventional Australian wisdom treasures a conviction that our nation was in the 'mind' of the Holy Spirit on the first antipodean solemnity of Pentecost.

Jesus, Bearer of the Holy Spirit

Within the synoptic tradition of the New Testament, the *Gospel according to Luke* constantly alerts his own community, and every other Christian community throughout the ages, to the role of the Holy Spirit in the earthly life of Jesus.²

Let us recall Lukan Spirit-references concerning the early life of Jesus. At the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel of his conception, Mary was assured that 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God' (Lk 1:35). Having fulfilled the rituals required by the Law at the birth of a son, Mary and Joseph returned to their home at Nazareth. There we are told how 'The child grew and became strong and the favour of God³ was upon him' (Lk 2:40). Following the incident of his being found in the Temple among the doctors of the Law, we read how Jesus returned

with his parents to Nazareth and ‘increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour’ (Lk 2: 41-52).

We recall also significant Lukan Spirit-references in Jesus’ adult life. Confronted by crowds seeking his baptism at the River Jordan, John the Baptist strongly disclaimed any question of his own messiahship asserting unequivocally that ‘I baptize you with water, but one more powerful than I is coming. . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire’ (Lk 3:16). When Jesus was at prayer after his own baptism by John, we read how ‘the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove⁴. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased’ (Lk 3:21). In preparation for Jesus’ ministry, Luke tells how he was ‘driven’ by the Spirit into the wilderness, and how after his time of temptation, he returned to Galilee ‘filled with the power of the Spirit’ (Lk 4: 1-14). The public ministry of Jesus began formally in the synagogue of Nazareth with his reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Is 61:1):

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good
news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the
captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.

Then rolling up the scripture and handing it to the attendant, Jesus sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were upon him as Jesus began to say to them, ‘Behold, today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (Lk 4:20-21).

There is a wonderful moment of elation recorded at the return of ‘the seventy’ disciples from an arduous and dangerous mission when ‘at that same hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit’ (Lk 10:21). We too share in the joy of the Spirit in knowing of Jesus’ assurance that perseverance in prayer means that for ‘everyone who asks, receives, and every-



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one who searches, finds, and for everyone who knocks⁵, the door will be opened. . .’ and ‘If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’ (Lk 11: 5-12).

Receive the Holy Spirit

The gift of the Spirit to the Church is the gift of the Risen and glorified Jesus. The great hope of Israel had been that with the coming of the Messiah, God’s spirit would be poured out upon all flesh, that ‘in those days’ the nations of the earth would be gathered, and that all who would call upon the name of the Lord would be saved. . . (Joel 2: 28ff). The ancient hope has been realized in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; his promise to send another Advocate to be forever with his Church has been fulfilled⁶ (Jn 16:1-15; Lk 24: 36-49).

The legacy of Luke’s grasp of the significance of the gift of the Spirit in the life of Christ and for the life of the Church has continued to be developed in the *Acts of the Apostles* (2: 1-11). The events of the first Christian Pentecost proclaim the ‘newness’ of Christ’s ‘release’ of the Spirit in the world as the Church is born. The phenomena of wind, fire and the miracle of tongues all testify to the fact that the old order has passed away, so that a new and eternal covenant may prevail. This new dominion celebrated still on the fiftieth day after Easter, far surpasses the former Jewish harvest Festival of Weeks (Leviticus 23: 15-21); the mighty wind filling the whole house

ushers in a new creation (Genesis 1:1-2); fiery tongues signify that the covenant of Sinai (Exodus 19) has been fulfilled, and that the dispersion of the nations at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) has been abolished. As the Good News will henceforth spread to the ends of the earth, all people will hear of the wonderful works of God in their own tongue. Would that space permit citation here of the full account of Peter's address to the crowd on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-36)! Suffice it to quote the concluding lines:

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear... Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2: 32-36).

In contemplating Christ's gift of the Spirit as illustrated throughout the *Acts of the Apostles*, Christians encounter exemplary faith-friends among that multitude of men and women who received the Spirit of Christ and who witnessed to his mission even unto martyrdom. A gift becomes a gift only when it is received and treasured—and so the stories told of those many named and un-named members of 'The Way', encourage one to respond to the Church's present call to a 'new' evangelization with commitment, zeal and courage.

It is in the fourth Gospel that we meet the sacramental sign of 'living water' for the Spirit. The Johannine motif of being born into Christ through water and Spirit begins with Jesus' baptism by John who testified that 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit' (Jn 1: 33-34). The motif develops as Jesus explains to Nicodemus, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit ...' (Jn 3: 1-7); it gains further emphasis from Jesus' request for a drink from the woman he encountered at the well of Jacob. Being a Samaritan, she was

taken aback at such a request from a Jew whose response to her dismay was to explain, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you 'Give me a drink' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' Moreover, Jesus declared, 'Everyone who drinks from this water will be thirsty again, 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...' (Jn 4: 1-13).

With tension gathering among the Pharisees and the 'crowds' over the identity of Jesus, the theme of 'living water' takes a dramatic turn during the ceremony of Water Libation on the final day of Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7: 37-39). The nightly drawing of water from the Pool of Siloam⁷ was accompanied by joyous singing, dancing and the playing of trumpets, cymbals and musical instruments. Boys and men carrying burning torches would dance before the immense golden candlesticks spreading their light to the whole of Jerusalem. The daily ritual of the pouring a jug of the water into a bowl that drained on to the altar was an act symbolic of the future outpouring of the Spirit by the Messiah (Ezek: 36: 24-27). It was at this climatic moment that Jesus stood up and proclaimed in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'' (Jn 7: 37-38). The evangelist adds, 'Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified.' The stunned crowd heard and knew what Jesus meant... (Jn 7: 40-44).

The ultimate meaning of these representative Johannine pericopes is revealed on Calvary when, with Jesus' earthly mission finished, 'he bowed his head and gave up (literally, 'handed over') his spirit' (Jn 19: 30). There followed immediately the piercing of Jesus' side and 'at once there came out blood

and water' (Jn 19:34). Thus, the Church was born from 'spirit' and the flowing of 'water' and 'blood'.

Spirit, Water and Blood: Sacramental Life of the Church

Year by year, Paschal-tide celebrates the Church's joyous re-reception of the great mysteries of Christ's resurrection and his sending of the Spirit. With the post-Vatican II restoration of the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults, along with a recovered architectural creativity in the design and placement of the baptistery at the entrance of new Catholic churches, or with suitable adaptation in older churches, there is heightened symbolism of life's Christian journey from 'the womb of Mother Church' to the altar of Eucharist.⁸

From as early as the second century A.D., and through appropriation of Pauline theology of the Spirit of the Risen and glorified Christ in the early Christian communities⁹, an obvious connection was made by Tertullian, and others¹⁰, with respect to baptismal 'birth in the Spirit' with the 'birth' fluids of blood and water issuing from the pierced side of Christ.¹¹ Famous baptismal homilies are now available in fine English translations. Besides being studied by RCIA candidates, they provide wonderful sources for contemporary Paschal-tide homilies. In keeping with the architectural development of baptisteries, theological focus was directed upon the baptismal bath/font as the 'womb of mother Church'.¹² The pierced side of Christ was interpreted as the 'gate of life' from which the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist enabled access to 'the life that is true life'.

Modern Christian pilgrims visiting ancient baptisteries in Ravenna or Rome, for example, are surprised to learn how early Holy Spirit titles, 'Mother of the Church' or 'Midwife', have preceded that of 'Mother Church'. An inscription in the Roman Lateran Baptistery reads:

Here is born a noble people for heaven. The Spirit gives them life in the fecund waters. Sin-

ner, descend into the sacred font to be washed from your sins. You go down old and return renewed in youth. Nothing can separate those who are reborn; they are one: One baptism, one Spirit, one Faith. In the waters Mother Church gives birth; she remains a virgin in her fecundity, delivering to the world by virtue of the Spirit...

Although the sacramental mysteries of the Church are symbolically embraced in an intensive way during Paschal-tide, this in no way implies that the Spirit of Christ is less present to the Faithful in 'ordinary' time. The Faithful are continuously sustained and embraced in the Spirit by virtue of the entire sacramental life of the Church. Every sacramental ritual embodies an *epiclesis* or prayerful 'calling down' of the Holy Spirit. This solemn invocation is expressed liturgically in the 'laying on of hands', by anointing with the oil of chrism in Baptism, Confirmation and priestly Ordination, and with oil especially blessed for the sacrament of the Sick. The gesture of extending of open hands over the head of the penitent in the sacrament of reconciliation and upon the elements of bread and wine to be consecrated in the Eucharist indicates prayer invoking the Holy Spirit.

The post-Vatican II restoration of a double *epiclesis* in the Sacrament of the Eucharist is particularly significant. The first *epiclesis* occurs when, for example, in Eucharistic Prayer II, the celebrant prays aloud: 'You are indeed holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness' and then, extending his hands over the bread and the wine, prays '*Make holy, therefore, these gifts we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and [the sign of the Cross is made over the elements] Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*'.

The second *epiclesis* calls upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify the 'mystical' Body of Christ which is the whole congregation: '*Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.*'

St Ephraem the Syrian (306-373) has left

a lasting appreciation of the meaning of *epiclesis* in the life of the Church:

There is fire and Spirit in Mary's womb;
there is fire and Spirit in the river in which
you were baptized.
Fire and Spirit in our own baptism,
in the bread and in the cup, fire and the Holy
Spirit.

In your bread is hidden the Spirit who is not
eaten;
in your wine dwells the Fire that cannot be
drunk.

The Spirit in your bread, the Fire in your
wine,
a remarkable miracle that our lips have
received.¹³

The Eucharist is the 'source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel'; it contains 'the entire spiritual wealth of the Church' inviting the Faithful to offer their daily lives of prophetic witness for truth and justice, their work, their charisms, and offer creation itself to the glory of the Father, in Christ and through the

power of the Spirit.¹⁴

Veni Creator Spiritus

Living as we do in times of secular and scientific advancement that is so often skeptical about 'eternal life', the urgent prayer of the Church calls upon the Creator-Spirit to make all things 'new'—to heal the trials and sufferings of the present in order to allow the Reign of God to break into a future of grace already given mysteriously in Christ. As Christians, we cannot but rely in faith upon Christ's promise that:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth... he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that [the Spirit] will take what is mine and declare it to you. (Jn 16: 12-16).

Amen! So may it be...

NOTES

1 See Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran, *Discovery of Australia by de Quiros* (Sydney: Catholic Book Depot, 1906) & James McAuley, *Collected Poems* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Publ., 1994), 137-215.

2 The Lukan tradition is supported by other synoptic references e.g. Mt 1: 18-25; 3:11; 12: 28-32; 28:19 & Mk 1:9-11, 27;13:11.

3 'Favour of God' or 'grace' is attributed theologically to the work of the Holy Spirit.

4 Re the biblical symbol of 'dove' for the Spirit see e.g. Gen: 8-12 (reliability); Cant 2: (enduring love, fidelity); Gen 15:9; Lk 2:24 (sacrifice); Hos 11:11 (peace & reconciliation in the messianic age).

5 We note here the forceful use of verbs in the present tense.

6. 'Advocate' (L. *consolator*) is variously translated as 'Comforter', 'Helper' & 'Paraclete' (G. *paracletos*).

7 For historical and biblical significance (Exek 36:24-27; Is 12:3, 44:3; ! Sam 16:13) of the Pool of Siloam see http://jewishroots.net/library/holiday-articles/water_libation_ceremony.htm

8 The tiny holy-water stoups at the entrances to most churches hardly remind the Faithful of the 'living waters' of their baptism into Christ! For extended discussion re Baptism and Eucharist in

the Gospel of John see Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory* (New York: Crossroad Publ, 2002), 'Giving Birth to Believers: Symbols of Motherhood', 135-165.

9 For the present context, see especially *The Letter of St Paul to the Romans*.

10 Clement of Alexandria, Ephrem, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine *et al.* See Edward Yarnold SJ, Ed., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994).

11 Jn 3: 5-7; 16: 20-22 (re. anguish of labour in childbirth & joy of delivery).

12 See Walter. M. Bedard, *The Symbolism of the Baptismal Font in Early Christian Thought* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1951).

13 Ephraem, *De Fide* VI:17; X:8. See Denis Edwards, *Breath of Life: A Theology of the Creator Spirit* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 101 for summary of Yves Congar's theology re 'The Life of the Church as One Long Invocation of the Spirit.'

14 See *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, §47 ff & *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, §5. Austin Flannery OP, *Vatican Council II* (New York: Costello Publ., 1965), 135; 325.