



Come, O Creator Spirit, come!

A Pastoral Letter to the Teulu Asaph from Bishop Gregory  
Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2020

**T**he moment which always electrifies me in the Ordination service is when all the ritual drops away for a moment, and we join together in singing one of the most ancient hymns of the Church, the Veni Creator (Come, O creator Spirit, come, and make within our hearts your home. To us your grace eternal give, who of your being move and live.) Sung in plainsong chant, unaccompanied where possible, it seems to me that, after all the build up, and before we actually come to the ordinations, everything is stripped away, and we simply seek the merciful action of the Holy Spirit, who alone can give meaning and significance to all that we are doing in that service.

If the Father is immortal and infinite, beyond our grasp, and the earthly ministry of the Son two thousand years ago, yet the Holy Spirit is the unending gift of God to his people to be with us, alongside us. In the Gospel according to John, there are, in the same form as so many other passages, two extended reflections by Jesus on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Chapters 14 and 16. The Spirit of God is named there as “paraclete”, a term, which in the Greek has the sense of “one called forth to be alongside”. The name is translated variously, as “advocate” or “counsellor”, and neither word does it full justice, for the paraclete draws alongside us, to act on our behalf to bring us into God’s presence. “We do not know what to pray,” says Paul, “but the Spirit himself pleads for us in yearnings that can find no words” (Romans 8.26)

Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Easter, and it falls around the same time as the Jewish festival of Shavuot, as Easter falls around Passover. It is the day which the Bible records as the occasion when the disciples were transformed by God’s Spirit which was revealed as wind and fire, sending them out with courage and passion to proclaim the Resurrection. And the Spirit stays with us still. The Spirit’s work is promised in every Baptism, invoked in every prayer, and it is the Spirit who gives life to faith. I believe that the Spirit is at work in every situation to bring life out of death, light out of dark, love out of misery, hope out of despair. The Spirit whispers to us when we pray, and prompts us as we live out our discipleship. The Spirit is our advocate, because he makes us bold enough to seek God’s grace, and binds us into communion with the Father and the Son. St Augustine spoke of the Spirit as the Love that binds the Father and the Son, and who binds us into the life of God. The Spirit also seeks to guide us into the path of fullness of life. “If you wander off the road to the right or the left,” promises Isaiah (30.21), “you will hear his voice behind you saying, “Here is the way. Follow it.”

I believe that God’s voice does speak to us in our hearts, if we train ourselves to listen. “My mind is full of thoughts,” someone might say to me, “How can I know which of them is the Spirit?”, but that is where stillness helps, where learning to measure the voice of God through Scripture and prayer and worship and fellow Christians and the testimony of the Church through two thousand years assists us in correct discernment.

Above all else, the Spirit seeks to encourage and embolden us. And the Spirit is Love. When we are prompted to care for our neighbour, that is the Spirit at work in us; when we feel compassion for the weak or the outsider, that is the Spirit leading us into Jesus’ example of love exercised for the sake of another.

Let us allow the Spirit to make a home in us. Let us use Pentecost to seek him to change us and mould us. Let us invite him to lead and to shape the Teulu Asaph. Come, Holy Spirit, come!