



Come Holy Spirit

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As Christian churches prepare to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, unlike the disciples in Acts 2:1, we will not be “gathered in one place.” But in our homes on Sunday, the Spirit still has the power it had then to fill the Church with Pentecostal fire.

Our ancestors in faith experienced the Spirit not only as an overwhelming experience that transformed their lives, but as the beginning of a life-long journey. They understood the Holy Spirit as the giver of gifts that helped and accompanied them on that journey – seven spiritual gifts that we need to reclaim.

Six of the seven gifts are identified in Isaiah 11:2 (The Inclusive Bible, adapted):

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on you—
a spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a spirit of counsel and strength,
a spirit of knowledge and reverence for the Lord.*

To this, the ancient Greek translation of Isaiah added a seventh gift of piety, which means more than folded hands and a bowed head, but a life completely open to God and therefore to others. The gift of piety is a way of life that says “yes” to God’s compassion and “no” to narcissism, greed, and self-righteousness.

In an age when lies obscure truth and denial of science threatens the future of human life, Isaiah offers a vision of life empowered by the gifts of God’s spirit, where wisdom and understanding overcome unthinking hatred, where counsel and strength empower us in the struggle for justice and peace, where knowledge and reverence show us the way that leads us out of despair towards trust in the power of God’s love.

This means that a Spirit-filled life has ethical and political consequences. The gifts of the spirit demand equity and justice:

*You will delight in obeying the Lord,
and you won’t judge by appearances
or make decisions by hearsay.
You will treat the poor with fairness*

*and will uphold the rights of the land's downtrodden...
Justice will be the belt around your waist—
faithfulness will gird you up. (Isaiah 11:3-5, TIB, adapted)*

Life in the power of the spirit leads step-by-step to God's future, an amazing future in which:

*There will be no harm, no destruction
anywhere on my holy mountain;
for as water fills the sea,
so the land will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:9, TIB, adapted)*

Isaiah's vision of a Spirit-filled life is a leap of faith. It is impossible to believe God's future could be real when the current crisis has not only filled our lives with fear, but revealed the cruelty of the systemic injustices that have left hundreds of millions in this emergency without sufficient health care, work, food and basic services. The struggles we face can crush our hope and paralyze our spirits. But Pentecost is a chance for us to open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit's gifts. The Spirit can liberate us from fear and show the way that leads to God's future reign.

In the words of an ancient song: "Come, Holy Spirit, inflame the light of our senses, pour love into our hearts, strengthen our weakness with lasting power."

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