

Air gets everywhere – it fills our lungs, our rooms, our homes, and the whole world ... and it's free! What a fitting image it is, therefore, for the Holy Spirit, the *ruah Adonai*, the “Breath of God” who fills all creation, and gives to it the gifts and blessings of the living and true God. In the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek, the word ‘spirit’ can also mean wind or breath. The Spirit of God is the life that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam; it is the air that the Risen Lord breathes over his apostles in the Upper Room after his Resurrection: “*Receive the Holy Spirit*”, and God gives it in abundance. There is a repetition of the word 'fill' or 'filled' in all our readings today: it gives the impression of completeness.

Hence, in the account of the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit “*filled the entire house*”, and then the apostles were “*all filled with the Holy Spirit*”, and then they “fill” the streets of Jerusalem where, speaking in the languages of the known world, they signify that the Spirit “fills” the inhabited world with God’s blessings. As the psalmist says, “*the earth is full of God’s riches*”.

The original Jewish feast of Pentecost was an early harvest festival: God fills the world with his material riches, his manifold blessings and gifts, saturated as they are with his holy presence. God desires that you and I should reap that harvest, and receive his blessings, and use his gifts - both material and spiritual - to the good of our neighbour and the world in which we live. So why aren't our lives filled with his love? Why do we not seek eagerly and daily the things of God?

St Paul in our second reading describes well the world that we live in, as one that is wounded and torn apart by sin: a world over which the Devil is prince, but Jesus is King and Lord. We are all somehow victims of sin, and face a mortal death. Each of us has been seduced and influenced by our mortal and weak nature, inducing us to choose sin. Often, against our better judgment, we think that by lying, fighting,

quarrelling, indulging the desires of the flesh, and by grasping for more control, power, and money then we can be happier. But we think this because we have been lied to by the world. At some level, we believed those lies because nobody acts in order to become more unhappy – we desired, rather, what we thought to be good, what we believed would lead to happiness and contentment. But, as St Paul says, these lies are *“opposed to the Holy Spirit.”*

Conversely, and knowing our predicament, Jesus promises to send the *“Spirit of truth”*. He is our *“Advocate”*, that is to say, he defends us from the assaults and lies of the Devil, and he is our Helper: for he comes to lead us *“to the complete truth”*. He comes like fire to burn away falsehood and lies. If we are led by the Spirit then we shall have *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control”*. In this broken world, who does not long for such gifts? Who does not seek to live in such a world where they are exercised and shared amongst us? If we desire these gifts of God, then we have to receive the Holy Spirit, and seek daily to *“be directed by the Spirit”*, as St Paul says. We must daily surrender to the Holy Spirit, reject whatever is contrary to God’s holiness, and so be filled with the Holy Spirit. Let us breathe in the Breath of God and be inspired by him.

Pope Francis said recently: *“Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God’s grace ... “the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint”.*” (Gaudete et exsultate, 34).

The Holy Spirit comes, therefore, to lead us into this great truth: that God has created you and I as potential saints; he has made us for a loving friendship with himself – to have the intimacy to call God our Father *“Abba”* – *“Daddy”*! To attain this great gift of blessed union in heaven with him, he has given us the greatest Gift of himself, he

gives us his Holy Spirit. So, every day, let us receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit; let us listen in silence to his soft inspirations, and obey his Words.

*“Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love!”*