

I Believe...In The Holy Spirit, The Giver Of Life

By Br Mark O'Connor FMS, 27 November 2020

“THE WIND BLOWS WHERE IT PLEASES; YOU CAN HEAR ITS SOUND, BUT YOU CANNOT TELL WHERE IT COMES FROM OR WHERE IT IS GOING. SO IT IS WITH EVERYONE WHO IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT.” JOHN 3:8



A dove in Lisbon, Portugal. Image: Sunyu/Unsplash.

Nothing is more important than experiencing the grace and beauty of the Holy Spirit of the Risen Christ, who breathes on us every day afresh.

Yet talk of the Holy Spirit—the Giver of life—in our culture can sound a little strange!

We should never forget, however, that in many other cultures, such language about the Spirit's reality is more ordinary. In those cultures, if you ask if God exists—not a remote deity in the sky, but God, the really real, the wholly gracious One—the answer is yes, of course!

That is why St Pope John Paul II, often affirmed the Catholic truth: that the Spirit is present beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church! The Spirit blows where he/she wills!

When John Paul II prayed at Assisi with the leaders of world religions and especially when he encountered indigenous peoples on his many papal trips, he was especially reverent of the 'seeds of the Spirit' present in their religious indigenous rituals.

Not for St John Paul II the racism and ignorance of those fundamentalist 'Catholics', who criticised the Vatican's respect for the religious symbols of the local indigenous peoples during the Synod on the Pan Amazonian region in 2019.

No! Listen again to St John Paul II's encouraging, prophetic and beautiful words addressing the indigenous people at Alice Springs in 1986:

“...FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS YOU HAVE LIVED IN THIS LAND AND FASHIONED A CULTURE THAT ENDURES TO THIS DAY. AND DURING ALL THIS TIME, THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAS BEEN WITH YOU. YOUR ‘DREAMING’, WHICH INFLUENCES YOUR LIVES SO STRONGLY THAT, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, YOU REMAIN FOR EVER PEOPLE OF YOUR CULTURE, IS YOUR ONLY WAY OF TOUCHING THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S SPIRIT IN YOU AND IN CREATION. YOU MUST KEEP YOUR STRIVING FOR GOD AND HOLD ON TO IT IN YOUR LIVES.”

Sadly, in our sceptical and pragmatic Australian culture, we can more easily be agnostic about the Holy Spirit, but be dead sure about the material world around us, even though modern physics sounds more and more like mysticism!

Many of us often neglect or fear the life of the Holy Spirit. But if there is a God, then certainly experiencing the grace of the Holy Spirit is the only realism.

Everything in the cosmos is finite and unable to explain itself. Everything is sustained in the depths of its existence by something greater: the Holy Spirit of grace that suffuses everything.

In this regard I love the famous sermon of Paul Tillich, ‘You Are Accepted!’, where he explains this gracious dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit in our existence:

“Do we know what it means to be struck by grace? It can happen when, after years of longing, perfection of life does not appear, when old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage. Sometimes, at that moment, a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: ‘You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!’”

May we accept this grace of the Holy Spirit close by; especially in this the great Southern Land of the Holy Spirit.

*Without the Holy Spirit God is far away.
Christ stays in the past,
The Gospel is simply an organisation,
Authority is a matter of propaganda,
The liturgy is no more than an evolution,*

*Christian loving a slave mentality.
But in the Holy Spirit
The cosmos is resurrected and grows with the
Birth pangs of the kingdom.
The Risen Christ is there,
The Gospel is the power of life,
The Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
Authority is a liberating science,
Mission is a Pentecost,
The liturgy is both renewal and anticipation,
Human action is deified.*

– Patriarch Ignatius, Metropolitan of Latakia, addressing the Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

This article is part of a series of reflections entitled *I Believe...Help My Unbelief: Meditations on the Creed* by [Br Mark O'Connor FMS](#).

Read the earlier reflections in the series at these links:

[*To say I believe*](#)

[*I believe in God the Father*](#)

[*I believe in one God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth*](#)

[*I believe in the visible and the invisible*](#)

[*I believe in one God*](#)

[*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ*](#)

[*Born of the Father*](#)

[*God from God, Light from Light*](#)

[*Begotten Not Made*](#)

[*Through Him all things were made*](#)

[*For our salvation*](#)

[*He came down from Heaven*](#)

[*I believe by the power of the Holy Spirit*](#)

[*He became man*](#)

[*For our sake He was crucified*](#)

[*He suffered death and was buried*](#)

[*He rose again*](#)

[*He ascended into Heaven*](#)

[*I believe... to judge the living and the dead*](#)

[*I believe...the Kingdom will have no end*](#)

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