

5th Sunday in Lent

Spirit of God, unleashed on earth
With rush of wind and roar of flame;
With tongues of fire we spread good news;
Earth, kindling, blazed its loud acclaim.

LBW #387



Fifth Sunday In Lent

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Psalm 51:10-12*

Renewal is something that cannot and will not happen without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This “Third Person of the Trinity” is the source of all renewal of faith and life for the Christian and for the Church. This week we will look at Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed; the one dealing with the Holy Spirit and what the power of the Spirit does in our lives and in our world.

Prayer: Almighty God, our redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be your messengers of forgiveness and hope in the world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, that we may follow your commands and proclaim your reign of love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Prayer of the Day for the Fifth Sunday in Lent – LBW #30)

Monday

Come, Holy Spirit, heav’nly dove,
With light and comfort from above.
Come, be our guardian and our guide,
O’er ev’ry thought and step preside.

SBH #127



In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. Genesis 1:1-3

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead, the Holy Spirit has . . .

Nobody likes to admit it, but everyone has something that they can’t do. Maybe you can’t sing, or maybe you can’t hit a baseball, or maybe you can’t make a cake from scratch, or maybe you’re totally unable to manage a computer, or maybe . . . *(fill in your own!)* But we really prefer to think that when it comes to believing in God or not, we make our own decisions. Not so, says Martin Luther! The power to believe is in itself a gift of God, given through the Holy Spirit. Like it or not, just as we cannot force our own salvation to happen, we cannot make ourselves believe in Jesus. Paul writes, “*no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, ‘Let Jesus be cursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord!’ except by the Holy Spirit.*” I Corinthians 12:3

Prayer: Come, O come, O quick’ning Spirit,
God before the dawn of time!
Fire our hearts with holy ardor,
Blessed Comforter sublime!
Let your radiance fill our night,
Turning darkness into light.

LBW #478

Tuesday

The light of truth to us display
And make us know and choose thy way;
Plant holy fear in ev'ry heart,
That we from God may ne'er depart.

SBH #127

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates them in everyone.
1 Corinthians 12:4

but instead, the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith

Call, enlighten, sanctify – as an older translation put it – is what the Holy Spirit does to and for believers. Once we open hearts to the gift, the *charism*, of believing in Jesus, there is a whole truckload of gifts that the Holy Spirit has for us! These gifts are enumerated in the writings of the prophet Isaiah (11:2-3) and are repeated in the Rite of Confirmation: *The spirit of wisdom and understating, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in God's presence.* Then we get a whole bushel of the “fruits of the Spirit”: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control!!! (Galatians 5:22-23) God is a prodigal giver; a “spendthrift lover who does not count the cost”. *He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? (Romans 8:32)* These are the gifts, freely given through the Holy Spirit to renew every believer, and through them to renew the whole Church!

Prayer: Holy Spirit, ever living as the Church's very life,
Holy Spirit, ever striving through us in a ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit, ever forming in the Church the mind of Christ:
You we praise with endless worship for your gifts and fruits unpriced.
LBW #523



Wednesday

Lead us to Christ, the living Way,
Nor let us from his pastures stray;
Lead us to holiness, the road
That we must take to dwell with God.

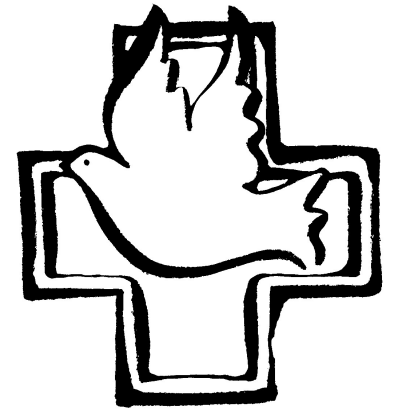
SBH #127

The gifts that he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.

We stand individually in relationship with God through the power of the Spirit, but through the power of the Spirit we also stand in relationship to each other. This is the horizontal arm of the cross – the one that reaches out to encircle the world and embrace all times. This is the “one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” This is the Body of Christ! When God Calls us, he Calls us into community. In the excitement and intimacy of our personal relationship with God, we dare not ignore this additional dimension. And the gifts that we are given through the Spirit are not simply for our personal gratification, but for building up the Body of Christ, for strengthening and supporting each other in the faith. And while we may be unable to gather because of fears for safety, we can still connect with each other; pray for each other; share love with each other by phone, mail, e-mail, Zoom! We are the Church, the body of Christ!

Prayer: Let us build a house where love will reach beyond the wood and stone,
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome in this place. ELW #641



Thursday

We all confess the Holy Ghost,
Who, in highest heaven dwelling
With God the Father and the Son,
Comforts us beyond all telling;
Who the Church, his own creation,
Keeps in unity of spirit.
Here forgiveness and salvation
Daily come through Jesus' merit.

LBW #374

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9

*Daily in the Christian Church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins
– mine and those of all believers.*

Forgiveness is the gift that makes life in community possible. The 1970's film "Love Story" made popular the motto, "Love means never having to say 'I'm sorry.'" But in truth, love means saying "I'm sorry" and meaning it! Forgiveness comes to us from God through the Holy Spirit, but it then has to flow through us to others. Forgiveness that is not shared is like a stream that is clogged. It becomes stale and lifeless. But when we share the forgiveness we ourselves receive from God, life is renewed and relationships are restored.

Prayer: God! when human bonds are broken
and we lack the love or skill
to restore the hope of healing,
give us grace and make us still.
Through that stillness, with your Spirit,
come into our world of stress,
for the sake of Christ forgiving
all the failures we confess. WOV #735



Friday

Lead us to heav'n that we may share
Fullness of joy forever there;
Lead us to God, our final rest,
To be with him, forever blest.
SBH #127

But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. Romans 8:10-11

On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life.

Life – eternal life – is the final gift we receive from the Spirit. It is the culmination of the promise made at our Baptism and renewed each time we receive God's love and forgiveness in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. And it is the ultimate gift of community – that the life we share in Christ in this world does not come to and end when our mortal lives end; that the community that is the Body of Christ, created by the Holy Spirit, transcends the limits of time and space.

Prayer: O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God,
Increase our faith in our dear Lord;
Unless your grace the pow'r should give,
None can believe in Christ and live;
O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God.
WOV #680



Saturday

Holy Spirit, truth divine,
Dawn upon this soul of mine;
Word of God and inward light,
Wake my spirit, clear my sight.
LBW #257



When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth
John 16:13

This is most certainly true.

Ultimately, truth comes as revelation. Whatever research may be undertaken, in the final analysis, truth is not discovered, but revealed. Jesus promised his followers that the Holy Spirit would come to them and would guide them into all truth. And we claim that promise for ourselves who are Jesus' disciples in this day and age. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to perceive and receive God's truth as it comes in Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to see God's truth in the lives and words of those around us. The Holy Spirit shows us how God's truth is revealed to others in our lives and words. Praise God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom he makes known his truth and grace!

Prayer: To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three-in-One,
Be honor, praise, and glory giv'n
By all on earth and all in heav'n.
Hosanna, Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!
LBW #258