

**The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), fortitude (courage), knowledge, piety (reverence), and fear of the Lord (wonder as in wonderland)**

Wherever it is included in the celebration of the Eucharist on Pentecost Sunday – musically, especially in its original Latin composition - the very old (12<sup>th</sup> century) hymn *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come Holy Spirit) in itself amounts to an *experience* of the Holy Spirit's *arrival* among us.

In terms of its brief, quickly punctuated verses: *Come, Holy Spirit, come! / And from your celestial home / Shed a ray of light divine! // Come, Father of the poor! / Come source of all our store! / Come, within our bosoms shine . . .* we can *sense, feel* and not only hear the words. It has something of the violence of the strong wind that blew the disciples out of their refuge in that upper room in today's first reading – but in a gentler way.

One way to get the feel of it and to recognize just who or what the Holy Spirit is, try to ponder the contrasts that run through the hymn. Isolate first the problems it attacks: our living so often in the dark, our starving for meaning, our emptiness, our moments or seasons of sadness, our loneliness when by ourselves. Consider how overworked we are – in what has become drudgery, not life; how overheated we become, sweating things out, how anxious, how sometimes we feel like nobody, like existence seems like a lot of nothingness, how often we hurt but can't tell anybody. We can go for days, our souls parched, dormant, dry as dust; ever feeling guilty of doing or not doing things we ought not or ought to do. What a whirlwind of confusion!

But relative to all this, how does the Spirit respond? It (be it he or she?) sheds a ray of light divine, out of its store of so much insight, suddenly makes our bosoms shine, makes us all aglow. The best of comforters, in our loneliness we welcome the visits of the Spirit as a most refreshing guest, enlivening us with new horizons, positive things to think about and believe. Overworked, somehow the Spirit helps us to relax, cools us off; in some strange way, when in anguish, when we feel something like wings enfolded about our shoulders – divine hugs, divine sympathy? When we dread the nothingness of everything, feel like nothing, find everything and everyone incapable of satisfying our craving for something, someone real, then especially we feel a breeze coming from somewhere . . . Do we feel hurt for any reason? A residue of strength begins to grow! Has there been no rain for days? Suddenly you feel the moisture on the grass! Have you become stubborn, hard-hearted, cold-hearted? How come you're beginning to melt, soften, care, become even merciful to yourself? No more staggering. Pentecost comes more often than once a year.

And so we pray to the creative Spirit: *On the faithful, who adore / And confess you, evermore / In your sevenfold gift descend; // Give them virtue's sure reward; / Give them your salvation, Lord; / Give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia.*