

# *Spirit Filled*



In the Bible there are many images of the Holy Spirit such as wind, breath, and fire. The sound of a mighty rushing wind represents the power of the Holy Spirit. In comparison, the breath through which Jesus conveys the Spirit to his disciples is gentle and speaks of life. The description of Jesus breathing on his disciples in John 20:22, echoes the passage in Genesis 2:7 when God forms a man from dust and then breathes into his nostrils, making him a living being.

Here in Australia the shrub Poinsettia, native of Mexico, produces large red flowers in May and June, which are frequently used to decorate churches at Pentecost. As is seen above, the red petals suggest the flames of fire describing the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:3, "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them."

In John 14:26, on the night before he was crucified, Jesus comforted his disciples by telling them that although he was leaving them, the Holy Spirit would come as a helper, counsellor, teacher and to remind them of all he had said to them. We, Jesus' followers today, are likewise not left alone to struggle along in our Christian lives, but are given the Spirit of Christ to be in us and with us to assist us.

When we think about the Holy Spirit, we need also to consider the Trinity in

which the Holy Spirit is described as the love which flows between the Father and the Son. This love is not a self-absorbed love separating God from all else. Instead it is a communion of love that goes outwards to the other, and is the basis of God's life. This movement of the love of God for the other, was and is expressed in all God's activities and relationships.

The creation of our universe, and Jesus being born as a human being and crucified revealing God's love to us, were no casual experiments of God. These events were specific expressions of God's love, God's Spirit and God's very being.

We might have experienced love in marriage, family life, friendships or even as patriotic citizens wanting the best for our country, but God's love is something more. God's love goes out to all others, desiring their well-being and that they might share life in the loving communion of our Trinitarian God for ever. It is this love that is seen in the mission and ministry of Jesus.

In John 13:34, Jesus gave his followers and us a new commandment. We are not just to love our neighbour as ourselves, but to love one another as Jesus loves us. This is a love that demands the giving of one's life for the other.

We are called to witness to God's love in our relationships, not only with others close to us, but all others, wanting them to become what they are destined to be, by assisting them to develop their potential to love and live life fully in communion with God. The action of the Spirit in us as members of the body of Christ, directs and guides our sharing of God's love with others.

As human beings we are unique individuals formed by our backgrounds and experiences, who need and benefit from loving relationships with one another. In a church or social group each person has something valuable to contribute that no one else can. This may be seen when someone asks a question that puzzles us. We can avoid answering the question or stop, think, ask about it, and spend time wrestling with it. We may then find, surprisingly, all those involved have grown a little in their knowledge and love of themselves and God. Perhaps this is not so unexpected, as in the gospels there are over 300 examples of Jesus asking questions which often helped others to think more deeply and so better understand their lives. For example, the risen Jesus in John 20:15, asks Mary Magdalene, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are

you looking for?” Then in John 21, Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?”

In the current war between Russia and Ukraine, when the Russian soldiers were forced to retreat from some towns they had earlier captured, they left behind hidden mines and booby traps to kill and injure citizens returning home. Some men are now risking their lives to save others, by going into the houses, streets and parks of these towns to find the explosives and defuse them. We could say that by their work they are showing something of God’s love. It is unlikely that we shall be called to do such brave acts, but we may be challenged by God’s love through a need we see, or questions we are asked or ask, to go out to others and do or say things we have never done or said before.

Returning to the image of fire, the Holy Spirit that fills us is able, if we are willing, to cleanse, change and open us to new transformed possibilities. This experience may be painful and even scary, but through it the Spirit can help us to mediate God’s love to others in fresh effective ways as we continue Jesus’ work by participating in God’s mission and ministry in the world.

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