

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME

By David C. Robinson, SJ

Today's First Reading and an Excerpt from the Gospel

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

Jesus stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down,

and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

LUKE 4:16-22

Reflection

The Bible is a compendium of narratives about the presence and working of the Spirit in creation and the human soul, from the opening of Genesis to the end of the Book of Revelation. In the Old Testament, the term is ***ruach***, which signifies wind, breath, spirit, or even mind. It is also the breath of life and the inspiring of God in human beings. The overall significance is that of an energetic presence, part of both the physical and the spiritual world.

In the New Testament, the term is ***pneuma***, which in Greek also signifies the breath of life, but also is the generative or organizing power behind both the human and the cosmic. This Spirit comes to represent the theological and philosophical dimensions of divine energy in creation, as well as the second person of the Christian Trinity. It's clear that there is no monochromatic definition that articulates the richness of Spirit in the biblical world. As a result, we must caution ourselves when we want to inject too complex a meaning to any given usage.

What does that mean for us as people of faith who look to scriptural narratives as lessons for our own paths in life? One thread of meaning that is consistent throughout biblical texts—the presence of God's Spirit is always lifegiving and inspiring, drawing our human experience into connection with the divine at work in the world. Spirit brings a new dimension and creative dynamism to life, thought, and interaction with all that surrounds us. God's 'breath of life' is more inspiration than respiration!

With the added layers of meaning that we encounter among the Greek communities, we are also invited to turn our gaze to the cosmic dimensions of the incarnation. The Jesus of history is also the embodiment of the Christ, the loving inspiration of God in the universe, creating and recreating all that is. The 'Spirit of the Lord' is as domestic as the enlivening touch of a child, and as inspiring as the endless expanses of the stars. Whatever the magnitude, the Spirit draws us deeply into ourselves as a portal to the grandeur of the God beyond thought or reason. Throughout biblical history, the Spirit is acknowledged as the source and center of all reality, from the smallest creature to the greatest spiritual revelation.

There are intriguing scriptural bookends in the Bible that highlight the scope of the Spirit in God's vision. In Genesis, we observe the Spirit of God hovering over the chaos of the unformed deep in the creation of the world, and it was truly good. At the conclusion of Revelation, the Spirit is present as the 'holy city New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God' at the end time. In our mortal journey of life, we are recipients of the simplicity and the grandeur that emerges from God's Spirit, within us and around us throughout eternity.



The Holy Spirit
Photo by David C. Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

- What has been your experience of the Spirit on your path of spiritual growth through the years?
- Have you known moments in which seemingly insignificant details of life

have opened your perspective on God through the action of the Spirit in prayer or reflection?

- How do you understand the role of the Spirit in your notions of life in the Church?
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