

In the Unity of the Holy Spirit

Frequently, we conclude our formal prayers by asking that they be heard “through Christ our Lord . . . in the unity of the Holy Spirit.”¹ The opening collects at Mass end this way, as does the greatest prayer we offer together: the Eucharistic Prayer.

This unity that the Holy Spirit brings to our praying by connecting us with Christ’s perfect prayer to the Father is rooted in the inner life of the Trinity, but it’s not something that can remain within the Trinity. Like everything about the Triune God, the unity of the Holy Spirit reaches out beyond the Godhead, uniting God and humanity, heaven and earth, liturgy and the rest of life in marvelous ways.

It was by the Holy Spirit, we declare in the Nicene Creed and in the Apostles’ Creed, that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became incarnate as Jesus Christ, and it is by that same Spirit that we are incorporated into Christ through the sacraments of initiation. By the Spirit our gifts of bread and wine (and we, ourselves) are consecrated in the Eucharistic Prayer and transformed into the Body and Blood of that same Jesus Christ.

As the unity of the Trinity reaches out to believers through the power of the Holy Spirit, so the Spirit works through us to spread that unity among the human family. We pray in the Second Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation that God will “endow us with [Christ’s] very Spirit, who takes away everything that estranges us from one another.” It is this Spirit, the priest tells us at the Pentecost Vigil, who will “bring to perfection [God’s] work in the world.”

The Spirit of Our Music

The rituals of Catholic liturgy, we believe, are communicative activities between God and us, bringing us to communion with the Trinity through our union with the self-offering Christ. It is the Holy Spirit sent by the Father and dwelling in us as the Body of Christ that unites us and calls us to share in these ritual activities—responses



to, renewals of, and celebrations of our relationship with God. It is the Holy Spirit who moves in our lives at every moment, awakening us to the truth of God’s ever-present love and grace, calling us to exclaim with and as the Church: “I believe.”

Those who craft and lead the music of worship must be, first of all, disciples (see *Sing to the Lord*, 49). They must seek the meaning of the Scriptures that we proclaim and the liturgy in which we participate, deepening their discipleship in order to craft and guide us in the music that will carry and express the meaning of these texts and actions.

Composers for the liturgy need not only know the composer’s craft and the place of music in ritual worship, they must also make themselves totally vulnerable to God, practicing *lectio divina*, accepting that their work is and must be a vocation, a ministry of service that provides a means of prayer for individuals and the community.

All pastoral musicians need to open themselves to the work of the Spirit as they explore hymns and settings of Scripture and ritual texts that composers have prepared, asking themselves how these texts and settings aid and deepen the community’s worship, spiritual life, and empowerment to be guided by the Spirit in the mission of being Christian and participating in God’s work of transforming our world. The root of all such openness to the Spirit is prayer.

Let us, then, hear the call of the Spirit to open ourselves to divine action, to let the Holy Spirit work in us, so that we can respond: “We embrace the work, the call: You are making all things new.”²

Notes

1. All references to liturgical texts in this insert refer to the English translation of the forthcoming *Roman Missal*, copyright © 2010, International Committee on English in the Liturgy.

2. Ruth Duck, “Living Spirit, Holy Fire,” from the collection *Welcome God’s Tomorrow*, © 2005 GIA Publications, Inc., Chicago, Illinois.