

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost this Sunday, I think of two very different perceptions of the gift of the Spirit that we find in the Bible. There is the rushing wind, the tongues of flames, the speaking in different languages in the lesson from Acts. On the evening of that first Easter day there is the gentle breath of the risen Christ as he greets disciples sheltering in the Upper Room. Different parts of the New Testament will bear witness to the various gifts of the Spirit. In the recent Service of Confirmation here in Howth the Archbishop prayed that the candidates may be confirmed in the Holy Spirit. So we have a picture of the Spirit as empowering, as inspiring in the life of the Church.

This is all brought together in the teaching of the Revised Catechism on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

11 What does the Church teach about God the Holy Spirit?

The Church teaches that God the Holy Spirit inspires all that is good in mankind; that he came in his fulness at Pentecost to be the giver of life in the Church, and that he enables me to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ.

This morning I just want to latch onto that enabling me to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ.

As I do that, I just want to share a story I came across a while ago. It is the story of a young boy who is being put forward for a musical scholarship for the violin. The day comes when he must meet with the master musician who has come to assess him. The poor lad practices furiously. Finally the time comes when he was to meet the master.

As he sits nervously in the music room, a kindly old man comes in, shakes hands, sits at the piano and says ‘Come, let us make a little music together.’ He plays an A on the piano and the boy tunes his violin, then looks anxiously

at the master. The old man asks, ‘Joseph, what would you like to play?’ Nervously the young lad held out his exercise book.

‘No, I want you to play something from memory, and not an exercise, but something easy that you know by heart, perhaps a song you like.’ Poor Joseph was confused but he was so enchanted by the gentleness of the face and the eyes.’ The old man did not insist, but instead played the opening chords of a song that was well known from school and Joseph began to play the melody with pleasure. ‘Now let us do that again.’ As Joseph played the old man added an extra accompaniment. The tune was played again and again and the room was filled with the melody as the boy played with more confidence.

The old man said, ‘Is that enough?’ This time Joseph shook his head and started playing again. The room was once more filled with music as Joseph and the old man were lost in the music as their various parts complemented and supported each other. As the melody came to an end the old man asked the boy, ‘Did you like that, Joseph?’. The boy, still unable to speak beamed with pleasure.

God’s work with us is like that of the music master with young Joseph. He draws out the best of us by accompanying us. We do great things together.

Now let us go back to that idea of the Holy Spirit and enabling me to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ. At Baptism, after the signing with the sign of the Cross, I will say to a child

May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,
restore in you the image of his glory,
and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ. **Amen.**

Restore in you the image of his glory – the Spirit enabling us to grow in likeness to Christ. This calls to mind the fruit of the Spirit, the outworking of the Spirit in my daily life and discipleship.

the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. *Galatians 5:22 ff*

Restore in you the image of his glory – this reminds that these gifts are not imposed from the outside, they are drawn out from deep within us as the Spirit works to heal and empower our fragile humanity.

This is where the story of young Joseph and the master musician strikes a chord in my own thoughts as I reflect on the work of the Spirit. Joseph had that music within him, working alongside him, the master musician brought it out in a wonderful way.

As I said earlier of God and the Holy Spirit, He draws out the best of us by accompanying us. We do great things together. May we be open to the working of the Spirit in our own lives. May the Spirit work in and through each one of us to bring forth fruit to his glory