



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Pentecost 2024

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On the Feast of Pentecost, we hear the familiar story of the Holy Spirit coming to the Apostles, appearing as “*divided tongues, as of fire*” (Acts 2:3). The image of the Holy Spirit as fire is a familiar one, with a rich and beautiful tradition in our Church.

This year, as we see the news reports of wildfires and evacuations starting already, and face the reality of another long, hot, and dangerous summer, I find my thoughts turning to another rich and traditional image God’s Holy Spirit: that of water. In the third century after Jesus’ birth, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote this reflection on the living water of the Holy Spirit:

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of living water, welling up into eternal life. This is a new kind of water, a living leaping water, welling up for those who are worthy. But why did Christ call the grace of the Spirit water? Because all things are dependent on water; plants and animals have their origin in water. Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on through the whole of creation. It does not come down now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it.

In the same way the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible, apportions grace to each person as he wills. Like a dry tree which puts forth shoots when watered, the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit never changes, the effect of his action, by the will of God in the name of Christ, are both many and marvelous.

This Pentecost, I invite you to join me in praying that God will rain down his Holy Spirit upon us. May it quench our fevered anxieties; bring new life to hearts made dry and barren by fear and indifference; and refresh and sustain us in the difficult and necessary work of renewing our relationship with God, with humanity, and with all creation. Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

In Communion,

Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria