

Lent Reflections on the Stained-Glass Windows



The East Window

The Holy Trinity: God the Holy Spirit

Thursday in the Second Week of Lent

Reading: Isaiah 11:1-9

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Commentary

In the Gospels, the Holy Spirit is said to have descended on Jesus at His baptism 'like a dove,' and so He is often depicted as a dove in Christian art. In many paintings of the Annunciation for instance, the Holy Spirit is shown in the form of a dove, coming down towards Mary on a beam of light. We see such a beam of light in our window, connecting the Hand of God with the Dove and Jesus: here is the Holy Trinity, of one source and one Being.

The Book of Acts describes the Holy Spirit descending on the Apostles at Pentecost like 'the rush of a mighty wind,' and as 'tongues as of fire.' (Acts 2:2) The Holy Spirit is sometimes symbolised by a flame and there are seven tongues of flame surrounding the Dove in our window.

These seven tongues of fire are a reference to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which are found in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (our reading today). In this passage the gifts have been seen as characteristics of the Messiah, understood by Christians to be Jesus. In St Luke's Gospel, after being tempted in the wilderness, Jesus returns to the synagogue at Nazareth where He reads from the Prophet Isaiah, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.... 'and says to the assembly, 'Today the Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (4:18ff)

It is Christian teaching that we receive these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit at our baptism and that they are strengthened at our Confirmation. In fact, when the Bishop prays of the candidates to be confirmed, he prays,

Almighty and ever-living God,
you have given these your servants new birth
in baptism by water and the Spirit,
and have forgiven them all their sins.
Let your Holy Spirit rest upon them:
the Spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**;
the Spirit of **counsel** and **inward strength**;
the Spirit of **knowledge** and **true godliness**;
and let their delight be in the **fear of the Lord**.

Meditation

Ponder and pray slowly and specifically for the seven gifts of the Spirit.
Read the list below and pause and pray after each one.

Wisdom: That we may see God at work in our lives and in the world
and that it may have deep meaning for us.

Understanding: That we may we comprehend how we need to live as
followers of Christ, and that we may relate to the truth of God's loving
purposes in our lives.

Counsel (Right judgement): That we may be enabled to know the
difference between right and wrong and to choose what is right.

Inward strength (or fortitude or courage): That we may be able to
overcome our fears and take risks as disciples of Christ, willing to stand
up for what is right and have the firmness of mind to endure difficult
situations.

Knowledge: That we may be helped to perceive the greatness of God and His love for creation, to know the meaning of God in Christ.

True godliness (or Piety): That we may be given the gift of reverence for God, a deep respect and devotion, and, as we come before Him, humility, trust and love

Fear of the Lord (or Wonder or Awe): that we may have a joyful awareness of God's magnificence and the grandeur of His love for us.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

by the power of your Holy Spirit

you give your faithful people new life in the water of baptism.

Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit,

that we who are born again may serve you in faith and love,

and grow into the full stature of your Son, Jesus Christ,

who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

now and for ever. Amen.