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RITE



Come, Holy Spirit



eni, Sancte Spiritus.” Thus begins the “golden sequence,” the great twelfth-century prayer to the Holy Spirit. The beauty of this lyrical poem has always attracted me deeply, and led me to reflect on the Holy Spirit as seen through other hymns in other times and in other cultures. Much of my world is music, poetry, and images, and these interpretations of the Spirit have had a direct link to my spirituality and the core of my being. With these points in mind, I would like to bring several of these influences out and explore more deeply just what it is they have taught me, with the hope that my insights may be of value to others. These hymns are not arranged chronologically, but rather in the order upon which they influenced my life.

■ Veni, Sancte Spiritus

*Veni, Sancte Spiritus,
Et emitte coelitus
Lucis tuae radium.*

I remember the incense, I remember the solemn gestures, but mostly I remember the beautiful, haunting melody of this chant. As a young girl, I had no idea what the Latin was saying, but I knew from what I was singing, hearing, and feeling that this was holy. The nature of the chant took me beyond all the natural limitations posed by my lack of knowledge and understanding. Years later, I think that this was my first

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awareness of the power of the Spirit to move us, and to move within us.

While scholars may debate the origins of this chant, no one can argue with the images it provides for the Holy Spirit: father of the poor, comforter, soul's guest, and refreshment in noonday heat, to name just a few. It also calls forth the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit. Because the chant was in Latin, it took other versions and forms and translations of the hymn to reach me and teach me the depths of these words. Surely, the most common source would be "Come, Holy Ghost."

■ Come, Holy Ghost

*Come, Holy Ghost,
Creator blest,
And in our hearts take up thy rest;
Come with thy grace and heav'nly aid
To fill the hearts which thou hast made.*

In my youth this hymn was seldom reserved for Pentecost, but was used frequently throughout the church year in the course of the "four-hymn syndrome" Mass. "Veni, Creator Spiritus," the Latin source, is attributed to Rabanus Maurus in the eighth century and is actually a much older piece than "Veni, Sancte Spiritus." The song that I belted out in church as I grew up was translated into English in the eighteenth century by Edward Caswall and set to the seventeenth-century tune "Lambilotte."

While Holy Ghost is probably the image that I received most strongly and questioned most fondly, I wondered, "Was it like Casper the friendly ghost, did it wear a white sheet, or what?" Though I had many questions and a child's silly curiosities, I also sensed that there was nothing to fear, but rather that there was something to embrace. Comforter would "fill the hearts which thou hast made."

■ Spirit of God

*Spirit of God in the clear running water
Blowing to greatness the trees on the hill.
Spirit of God in the finger of morning:
Fill the earth, bring it to birth,
And blow where you will.
Blow, blow, blow till I be
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.*

© Miriam Therese Winter, Medical Mission Sisters

In the 1960s, the church was going through the renewal of the Second Vatican Council, and new vernacular hymns were on the rise. One group that took a lead was the Medical Mission Sisters. When I went to my second grade religion classes, I was exposed to their simple, folksy tunes, which fit in well with the country and folk music I often heard at home. They bode well with me and settled deep within me.

Thirty years later, as I am writing this essay, I could easily pull the words from the recesses of my memory. Through them I would learn to see the Spirit as existing in all creation and nature. Later verses of the song continue to speak of sheep, pastureland, and the willow trees, which were but a stone's throw away from my childhood home. Maybe I did not have the skills to verbalize it, but I realized that the Spirit was not just confined to a church building, or an hour of prayer on Sunday, or CCD on Wednesday night. I knew that the Spirit was ever present. I would not be so deeply touched by another essence of the Spirit until I was 18 years old.

■ Every Time I Feel The Spirit

*Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit, movin' in my heart, I will pray
O ev'ry time I feel the Spirit, movin' in my heart,
I will pray*

*Upon the mountain my Lord spoke
Out of his mouth came fire and smoke*

*And all around me it looked so fine
I asked my Lord if all was mine*

*Jordan river chilly cold
It chills the body but not the soul*

*There ain't but one train upon this track
It runs to Heaven an' runs right back*

Shortly after graduating from high school, I spent three weeks touring Europe with a 40-voice *a capella* choir. We were not a religious group, but simply students from all across a northwestern state. We performed a wide variety of pieces, from secular French chansons to a complete Latin Mass. But the songs that brought audiences to their feet were the Negro spirituals. We sang several of these selections. Very often, the sheer power of the moment created an unspeakable transition and the group went from performers to "pray-ers" as the spirituals became very personal. The one that would literally spend me was "Every Time I Feel The Spirit." The vigorous refrain became a profession of faith: "Ev'ry time I feel the Spirit, movin' in my heart, I will pray, O ev'ry time I feel the Spirit, movin' in my heart, I will pray." In one instance, I recall making eye contact with the director. He and I were both crying. It was so emotional that it became difficult to continue singing.

The simple verses spoke of many spiritual moments and experiences, as the singer, like Moses, met God on the mountain; like Jesus, was tempted in the desert; like Jesus, had to cross the cold Jordan; and like the slave, expressed great hope in the freedom train leading one away from slavery to heaven. The slavery could be interpreted as the actual slavery of the African Americans as well as our bondage to sin.

Another African people has also suffered and been oppressed. Maybe it comes as no surprise to me that they also called upon the Spirit.

■ If You Believe And I Believe

*If you believe and I believe
And we together pray,
The Holy Spirit must come down
And set God's people free.*

*And set God's people free,
And set God's people free;
The Holy Spirit must come down
And set God's people free.*

© John Bell, Iona Community

I came in contact with this song while attending a conference by John Bell of the Iona Community when I was in graduate school. Iona is an ecumenical community located just off of Scotland, and it is very much in the spirit of Taizé. While the last hymn was an African American hymn, this song has South African roots. John Bell found it there and brought it back and adapted it. It is a simple *ostinato* tune, and after one has sung through it many times, it penetrates the heart, mind, and soul.

One might argue that saying the Holy Spirit *must* come down is too demanding, but for me it spoke of great trust, faith, and hope. It spoke of the Holy Spirit as liberator. During the workshop I was attending, I was told that the South Africans used to sing, "The Holy Spirit must come down and set Zimbabwe free." All of us are held in some sort of bondage from which we need to be set free, be it individuals with painful memories, addictions, or fears; victims of domestic violence; oppressed women in Afghanistan; the people of El Salvador who still struggle for freedom; or any of a thousand situations that we can imagine. One could almost fill in the blank: "The Holy Spirit must come down and set _____ free." I do not believe this is a command, but rather a prayer of intercession, a prayer of hope.

■ One Spirit, One Church

*We are a pilgrim people.
We are the Church of God.
A fam'ly of believers,
Disciples of the Lord.
United in one spirit,
Ignited by the fire.
Still burning through the ages,
Still present in our lives.*

© Maryanne Quinlivan, OSU

To my mind, this is one of the best hymns to be produced in the last 30 years. It attracts me musically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Songwriter Kevin Keil has combined a refrain that was written in 1990 with the Rabanus Maurus text that was introduced earlier in this essay. First there is the refrain, followed by the traditional "Come, Holy Ghost," then refrain, then second verse. For the third verse, the doxology, the refrain is sung as a counterpart *with* the doxology. So all together, there is an eighth-century text, a seventeenth-century melody, and a twentieth-century

melody and text combined! It is wonderful. It strikes me as reaching through time and space as we pray and sing with those who have gone before us, those present with us now, and those who are yet to come. Everyone experiences the gift of the Spirit. "Still burning through the ages, Still present in our lives." Such is the gift of the Spirit.

■ The Spirit Sends Us Forth

*The Spirit sends us forth to serve;
We go in Jesus' name
To bring glad tidings to the poor,
God's favor to proclaim. . . .*

*Then let us go to serve in peace,
The gospel to proclaim
God's Spirit has empower'd us;
We go in Jesus' name.*

© Dolores Dufner, OSB

Contemporary wordsmith Dolores Dufner has likewise set her text to a seventeenth-century tune in this simple but effective hymn. What is so very different about this text is that the Spirit is not giving something to us, as has been the case in so many other hymns we have examined. Rather, the Spirit is commissioning us, empowering us to serve. So the Spirit is not only about receiving, but about giving back as well. I think this is a train of thought that can easily be lost if we are simply looking to the Spirit to care for our own needs. Just as we earlier called upon the Spirit to "come," it is now telling us to "go!"

■ Conclusion

As I continue to reflect on this theme, I realize that there are many more such "Spirit" songs that have touched me at different times in life, and that there are many I have yet to discover. But to mention any more would do a disservice to everything that has inspired me in the hymns I have already mentioned.

So what is it that can be said about the Spirit? What is it that enkindles me most deeply? Above all, I believe that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of hope. And, whether we are aware of it or not, I believe that this Spirit of hope can be found almost anywhere: in our labors, in the warm sun, in the wind, in the crops of the fields, in the oppressed peoples of the world. The Spirit can be found in an ancient hymn or a contemporary text. The Spirit will use whatever means are available to liberate, to comfort, and to heal. The Spirit is silence, and the Spirit is a song to be sung. And we are all called to sing it!

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