

## May Reflection – Hope and The Spirit of God

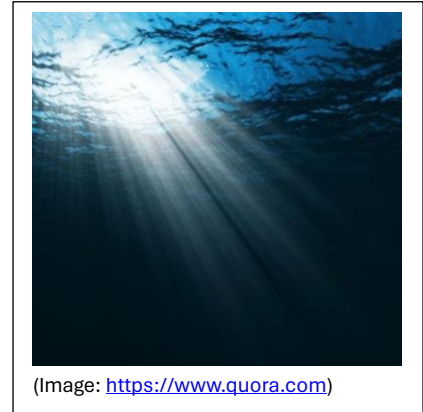
One of my favourite passages in the Bible (although to be honest, I do have a quite a few) is found at the very start:

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”* (Genesis 1:1-2, TNIV)

No order. No light. No life...

...but the Spirit was hovering, waiting to bring forth the potential that lay unseen.

We live in a world that at times seems very dark. Wars, natural disasters, terrorism, family violence all seem to rule the daily news cycle. Closer to home there are our own personal troubles – the family member battling addiction, the close friend who has received some troubling medical news, our own battles with fear and doubt.



But the Spirit of God is hovering. What appears dark, chaotic and lifeless can change. A few weeks ago, we celebrated Pentecost Sunday – that day when we remember the receiving of the Spirit by the early apostles and hence, the beginning of the Church. Pentecost was the fulfilment of a promise made by Jesus that He would not leave us alone but would send an Advocate – the Holy Spirit – who would teach us and remind us of everything He said (John 14: 16, 26).

### Reflection

*Are you currently facing a difficult situation – something that leaves you feeling a little downcast? Spend some time in prayer asking the Spirit of God to remind you of something that Jesus said that gives you hope.*

*Maybe you know someone facing an uncertain future. Spend some time in prayer considering how you might be able to comfort and encourage them.*

Theologians identify many “functions” of the Holy Spirit, including, sanctifying us (that is making us more like Christ); conviction of sin; empowering us; teaching; guiding, and unity with other believers. It is, however, the hope that the Spirit brings that I find most appealing. Yes, we all need the things I listed, but on a day-to-day basis, it is knowing that I am not alone, that I find most compelling. Regardless of what I

face, the Spirit is as close as my next heartbeat, and it is that thought that gives me both hope and courage.

Our lives are very much a journey, shaped by God. We do not live in vacuums, but instead find ourselves confronted by the realities of a very present world. We, however, are to put our faith in an even more present God. And in that respect, our lives are very similar to that of Catherine McAuley.

Mary Sullivan writes that “Catherine’s God was not ‘out there,’ but actively within, bringing ‘us joyfully on the end of our journey.’”<sup>i</sup>

Catherine lived in times that were themselves dark and desperate. Religious persecution, political unrest, extreme poverty and prejudice against the poor and women was rife. She was able to serve those in need around her because her life remained centred on God. Though there must have been times when she felt overwhelmed, hope, not despair, propelled her forward.

*“We have one solid comfort amidst this tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centred in God for whom alone we go forward or stay back.”*  
(Catherine McAuley, 1840. “Letter to Mary de Sales White”).

The Spirit of God brings hope. It is the Spirit that hovers

### Reflection

*Do you agree with the statement that there must have been times when Catherine felt overwhelmed?*

*What are some of the practices that Catherine attended to that helped to maintain her faith and hope?*

over the deep waters, bringing life and order out of chaos. It is the Spirit that makes dry bones live and raises Christ from the dead.<sup>ii</sup> The Spirit looks at the present and declares that the future can be different.

As you look at your present, I pray that the life of Catherine, and the Spirit of God will remind that you are not alone, nor powerless. There is always something we

can do, some way we can shine the light of God into dark places.

### Closing Verse

*“Let this hope burst forth within you, releasing a continual joy. Don’t give up in a time of trouble, but commune with God at all times.”* (Romans 12:12, The Passion Translation).

### Closing Prayer

*“Father, help me to live this day to the full,  
being true to You, in every way.  
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others,  
being kind to everyone I meet.  
Spirit, help me to love the lost,  
proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.  
Amen.”<sup>iii</sup>*

<sup>i</sup> Mary Sullivan (2012). *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McCauley*. p. 160

<sup>ii</sup> Clark H. Pinnock (1996). *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. p. 39

<sup>iii</sup> Adapted from Lectio 365