

7. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and Son He is worshipped and glorified, He has spoken through the prophets.

For me the Holy Spirit is the least familiar member of the Trinity, despite the profession of faith, he remains a somewhat shadowy figure, yet in our believing his work and purpose is quite clear. It is the Holy Spirit who makes God's word known to us, for as St. Paul tells the Corinthians, 'no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God'. We believe Christ to be that Word, and so it is the Spirit who makes God's living utterance known to us. As the new Catechism puts it, 'the Spirit doesn't speak of himself rather the Spirit, who 'has spoken through the prophets', makes known the Father's Word.

The problem I suppose in understanding the Spirit, is that we can not see him, he is more an invisible presence, like a breath of air, but at the same time the Catechism says we know him in the Church, through the scriptures he inspired, in the tradition to which the Church Fathers have witnessed, in the Church's *magisterium* or teaching authority, and in the sacraments, where in words and symbols, the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ. He is there too in the *charisms* and ministries by which the Church is built up in the signs of apostolic and missionary life, and in the witness of the Saints through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation – quite an impressive amount of work under his belt – no wonder we call him 'Lord and giver of life.'

He doesn't work on his own however all his work takes place within the context of the life of the Holy Trinity, as we say 'he proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified'. Though each person of the Trinity is distinct, the Son and the Holy Spirit clearly have a joint mission. The Word of God and the breath of God together, Christ the visible image of the invisible God and the Spirit who reveals that Word to us. The words we say in the Creed remind us Sunday by Sunday of this closeness of the working of the Son and the Holy Spirit, if we want a relationship with Jesus, then we must first have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

As we consider the phrase 'He has spoken through the prophets' it reminds us that from the very beginning until the fullness of time the work of the Word and the Spirit, though hidden, has always been at work. The Old Testament tells us how the Holy Spirit was preparing for the coming of the Messiah, neither the Spirit or the Word is fully revealed but both are promised and eagerly awaited and watched for! The Church reads the Old Testament to see what the Spirit 'who speaks through the prophets' wants to tell us about the coming Christ.

By the prophets we don't just mean those who we know by name but all those whom the Holy Spirit has inspired. We can not discuss all the workings of the Holy Spirit here, suffice it to say that as we look at the scriptures we see that broad sweep of his actions from the beginning of creation when the Word of God and his breath, the Spirit, are there together. So Benedict, in his book, 'I believe' speaks of the world we live in as 'the work of the creator Spirit, adding that 'the world does not exist by itself, it was brought into being by the creative word of God and the creative spirit of God'.

The orthodox liturgy speaks of the Spirit 'sanctifying and animating creation', with power over life being his, he preserves creation 'in the Father, through the Son.' Benedict says 'faith in the creator spirit is an essential part of the Christian creed,' that Spirit 'present in nature as a whole and in a special way, in the human person, created in God's image'. Benedict reminds us that as the creator Spirit first showed himself in 'the silent grandeur of the Universe' our faith also teaches us that the Spirit speaks with human words, and that 'he entered into history as a force that shapes history, a Spirit who speaks and who comes to us' in the writings of scripture.

And so it was that in the fullness of time, the Holy Spirit completed his work of speaking as the Word' and shaping and making a people for God – with the birth of John the Baptist, it is in him that the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. It is in the ministry of John the Baptist that we see the Spirit beginning the work of restoring man to 'the divine likeness' which he had lost at the Fall. In the gospels it is Jesus who is the Christ, 'the anointed one', but it is the Spirit who makes him so, in the presence of John Baptist, beside the River Jordan.

Mary, of course, plays her part too, for it is in her, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Father finds a dwelling place where his Son and the Spirit can at last dwell among men. It is in Mary that the Holy Spirit fulfils the Father's loving plan, it is with and through the Holy Spirit that the Virgin Mary conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. From then on the Christ and the Spirit work in cooperation, their mission on behalf of the Father in turn then becomes the mission of the Church.

In fact Benedict speaks of them as inseparable! He recalls the beautiful picture in St. John's account of the Risen Christ's first appearance to the disciples on Easter evening. Here the lord breathes on his disciples, bestowing the Holy Spirit upon them. The Dutch Catechism gives us another beautiful image, reminding us

that after the redemptive death of Jesus upon the cross The Spirit literally flows out of him, the water flowing from his side, being the water of Baptism and signifying life in the Spirit for all believers. Prof. Macquarrie too ponders on the closeness of the Holy Spirit and Christ, remarking that 'so closely is the revealing and reconciling work. of the Spirit associated with the work of Christ that in the New Testament there seems to be no hard and fast distinction between The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ, or indeed the Risen Christ.

The Church acknowledges that closeness or inseparability not only in creedal form but in our understanding of the Church as being not only the Body of Christ but also the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of both, Christ and the Holy Spirit to bring us to share in that communion Christ now glorified, shares with the Father, Jesus in turn sends the Spirit 'to those who believe in Him', just as he did with that first group of disciples. At Baptism we become God's children by adoption, incorporated into the body of his Son, the Church, then the Spirit goes on working in us, uniting us to Christ and making us alive! Present with us as members of the Church, the Body of Christ, and filling us with God's grace, drawing us closer and closer into a real relationship with Christ himself.

It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the Risen Lord to us and opens our minds to understand and share in his death and resurrection – the Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order not only to bring us closer into communion with Christ, but help us to bear fruit, and enter into a new way of living. Drawing our thoughts about the working of the Holy Spirit to a close, If, as we believe, the Church is the Body of Christ, then it is, says Benedict, 'an organism of the Holy Spirit', with 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit, fusing us, as individuals, 'into a single, living, whole.' And says Benedict, 'it is in the fullness of this Body, that we discover our task, living for one another and dependent on others, drawing deep life from the One who lived and suffered for us all and who through his Spirit, draws us to himself in the unity of all God's children'.

In this sense I think it is more than clear why we call the Holy Spirit 'the Lord and giver of life'. For those who are not too sure about it, then we are not alone, for as our old friend Professor Quick concludes, in his 'Doctrines of the Creed', 'the nature of all life and therefore of its giver, can only be learned gradually by living.' (a kind of suck it and see) We may still have much to learn about the Holy Spirit in relation to our own lives, but for Prof. Quick the Holy Spirit is nothing less than (the doctrine of) the manner and method of the presence and activity of the living God in his created world and... it is through our fellowship with the Holy Spirit that we come to know him. Which pretty much sums up all we need to know!