

Encountering the Holy Spirit

In this section, a young person, a member of the clergy, a member of the laity, a diocesan group representative and an academic, all drawn from our diocesan community, share a personal reflection on their relationship to the Holy Spirit and the call to mission.

The Holy Spirit is a mystery of our faith. I like the definition of a mystery not as something we can't understand, but as something that we can understand endlessly. The Holy Spirit is mentioned all the time in the Catholic faith, we profess '*We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit*' in the Creed every Sunday. From Genesis to Acts we hear that the Holy Spirit is present within all of creation. In the new covenant given by Jesus, we hear that God will speak directly into our hearts, he will plant visions and dreams and the Holy Spirit will guide us. As you prayerfully read the reflections here, I hope you will have a sense of the Holy Spirit within yourself prompting, guiding, leading, inspiring and always creating something new.

Rebecca Leighton, Lay Catholic Chaplain at the University of Sunderland

'Do you not realise that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?'

1 Corinthians 3:16

I love this line from 1 Corinthians, I think it captures the heart of how the Holy Spirit works, and that is in us. This line can be applied to each of us individually but also to our church communities. In his writing, Paul uses the plural form of 'you' when describing the temple of God. He is clearly writing to the church in Corinth and in his words he is saying that together as a Church Community, they are the temple of God and God lives within them. Within their relationships and within their love for one another. It really puts an emphasis on how important it is for us to belong to a Church Community. Faith is not something that can be lived out alone. We need each other to support and this is where the Holy Spirit intertwines itself into our lives. Through our relationships with others and in our actions.

In my day to day work as Lay Catholic Chaplain for the University of Sunderland, I see building community as one of the most essential elements of my job. Coming to university is one of the biggest steps a young person can take and it can be an even greater step if someone travels abroad to attend university. In our Catholic Chaplaincy, we are blessed to have people come from different countries around the world and for a lot of them, the Chaplaincy becomes a home away from home, or at least that's what I hope they feel. This Chaplaincy Community creates the temple that St Paul was talking about in his letter. Through our community prayer, through our interactions with one another and in reaching out to others, we mould ourselves into the temple of God and the Holy Spirit flows freely through us. The Church is not a building, it is the people.

Whilst community is essential in the workings of the Holy Spirit, it is important to recognise the Holy Spirit working through us as individuals. If we are vessels, then the Holy Spirit is the blood which pumps through us and stirs us to action. The movement of the Spirit in us is vital when living out our Christian mission. In his letter to the Galatians, St Paul states that 'Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit.' (Gal 5:25) The Spirit is our life and it gives life, it is our spiritual compass and as it moves us to spread the Gospel message, we in turn become more Christ-like ourselves.