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Beware – The Holy Spirit! Part 2

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BEWARE — The Holy Spirit!

Part 2

Anthony Gittins CSSp

We have five channels through which or whom the Holy Spirit speaks and inspires us (see “Beware – The Holy Spirit” Part 1 in the Spring 2015 issue of *Spiritan*). But we can identify another handful that we should look out for – this time obstacles to the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Five obstacles to the workings of the Holy Spirit

One: Sometimes we expect God to work miracles and solve all our problems, so we do nothing. This is muzzling the Holy Spirit.

Two: We may fail to look carefully enough for God’s presence in our daily experience. We look for the Holy Spirit in a great mountaintop experience when we should be looking in the highways and the byways, at the street corners and bus stops.

Three: There is a danger that we protect our carefully laid plans and initiatives so that nobody, not even the Holy Spirit, can interrupt them. We decide what we’re going to do, and don’t let any-

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faithful and kindle in us the
fire of your love. Send forth your
spirit and we shall be created, and
you will renew the face of the earth.”*

one get in our way, not even God. That's very, very tragic. *Four:* Sadly, we may have forgotten the story of Pentecost, or reduced it to the pages of history. So instead of becoming filled with the Holy Spirit, we become empty and dis-Spirited. We need to have a change of heart; we need to be a Pentecost people, with fire and focus, with a sense of direction and purpose.

And five: Perhaps we are not people of the Spirit. We even work against her, because we're simply afraid of what might happen if we were more open, trusting, vulnerable. We might just become fire; we might become a mighty wind; we might even become agents of change. But then we'd have to risk our overcautious and carefully controlled lives, and we're not sure we want to do that.

So we now have five signs of the Holy Spirit trying to communicate with us, and five more signs of our resistance to the presence of the energy of the Holy Spirit. And maybe the Holy Spirit herself is inspiring us to ponder them.

Truly Spirit-led people

Now let's try to identify the fruits of a Spirit-led life: what are the signs, and what kinds of people are actually living with and in the Spirit of God? To put it differently, what can we do to become a voice of the Holy Spirit, to become the sign or the action of the Holy Spirit? For consistency's sake, here is yet another handful of suggestions.

First, the Holy Spirit can be discerned in people who actually go "looking for trouble" – because that's exactly what Jesus did! He goes out of his way looking for people in trouble, troubled

people. But many people avoid trouble, people in trouble, and avoid being troubled by people. So, one sign that the Holy Spirit is near or even in us, is that we actually go out and do what Jesus did: look for trouble.

Second, people who pray to become disturbed, more aware, alerted to the cries of the poor and to suffering humanity, lest they fail to hear and respond to the voice of the Spirit – these are truly Spirit-led people. But some of us use headphones so we don't hear the cries of the poor.

Those animated by God's Spirit listen intently: they look and they watch; and they say, "I can't do everything, but I must do something. What can I do, what will I do? Why am I not as disturbed as Jesus was, and how can I be

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more aware and thereby help change and transform the world?"

Third: people gathered by the Spirit and animated by her are united and yet diverse: united in their diversity. We don't all have to be the same, but we should be on the same side: a team, but without uniforms. We don't all need to think or understand in exactly the same way. We have different perspectives and viewpoints – but our unity is stronger than our diversity. That's the sign of the Holy Spirit.

Fourth: people led by the Holy Spirit are absolutely convinced they can change the world, and they feel instinctively that if they don't try, they will be called to account.

The fifth and final sign of Spirit-led people is very

tangible: they live exciting and worthwhile lives; they are not bored, and they don't bore the life out of others. They don't just sit around doing nothing; they're animated, excited, even inspired. Inspired or in-Spirited: it's the same thing when the Spirit is actually God's Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is communicating every day

Here's a terrible statistic. Think of a representative sample of 100 people in the world today. Fifty of them are poor. Of those fifty, one-third will die of starvation; another third will be permanently impaired; and the final third will be forced into stealing, begging or prostitution. Fifty out of every 100 people on earth suffer some form of poverty, deprivation, dehumanization.

Worse: the poor are still, relatively speaking, the fastest growing group on earth, while 1% of the world's population owns 50% of its resources.

The Holy Spirit is trying to be heard, and the rich nations are deaf, or impervious, yet many of their people still say every week, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," or, "I wish God would do something."

Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is communicating every day in people we meet, and every single evening on the news. It's tragic that so many good people choose who to meet and who to avoid, and they tune out or turn off bad news at the flick of a switch. But it does not need to be this way, and every single one of us can do something right now.

"Come, Holy Spirit; come now; change our hearts; inspire us to think differently – and to go and change the world." ■