

---

## THANK YOU, BREATH OF LIFE!

---



As we come to the close of the year specially consecrated to the Holy Spirit, I ask you to join me in a gesture of deep gratitude to Him for all that He is to our Church. He it is who is the life of us all, the life of our Christian communities and of each one of their members. Without Him, we could neither live, nor love, nor forgive.

### BREATH OF LIFE

At the Bible week-end held at Edmundston, October 17 and 18, Father Roger Poudrier, O.F.M., presented the Holy Spirit as the "Breath of life." There is no life without a breath. One of the most characteristic descriptions in the Old Testament referring to the Spirit is found in a striking text of the prophet Ezekiel (37:1-10) describing the reanimation of the dry bones. The People of God are in exile in Babylon, discouraged and with hopes dashed. The prophet recounts how he was brought out by the Spirit of God and set down in the middle of a valley filled with bones. *"I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."* The bones came together, bone to its bone, with sinews on them, and covered with flesh. But there was no breath in them. There is no life without the Spirit. God then commands the prophet to prophesy to the Spirit, and the Spirit *"came into them, and they lived."* New beings revive through the breath of God.

### BREATH OF HOPE

In hard times, in times of trial, I invite you to read and reread chapter 37 of the Book of Ezekiel; it will be for you as it was for the people of Israel: a breath of hope. Even in those seemingly hopeless situations, God can bring new breath. Look at what is now happening in Central America, devastated by Hurricane Mitch: thanks to the Spirit, thanks to the conjugated effort of different countries and many dioceses including ours which is most generous, these countries will live again. Starving populations deprived of everything will be able to come back to life.

### BREATH OF JOY

In his excellent book Father Poudrier notes that Ezekiel is the prophet of the Spirit and St. Luke is the Spirit's evangelist. In the childhood narratives of Jesus, St. Luke mentions several mediations of the Holy Spirit: John the Baptist leaps for joy in his mother's womb; Elizabeth cries out with joy; the Virgin Mary exults in the Lord; Zechariah begins to prophesy; Simeon praises God, the prophetess Anna tells of Jesus to all who are awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. The coming of Jesus everywhere seems to carry with it as many comings of the Spirit. Saint Luke says as much about the Church's beginning, in his *Acts of the Apostles*: the first chapters are replete with this presence of the Spirit. If we only took the time to look at our Church, we too would discover this Breath which is the bearer of joy, hard at work everywhere, among us. Witness all that is taking place in the area of faith education, in sacramental preparation, in all those gestures of communion and fellowship, and in all the commitments to justice and peace.

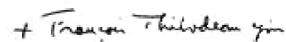
## BREATH OF POWER

It is not a spirit of fear that we received at baptism and confirmation, but a spirit of power. The story of Pentecost given us by Saint Luke shows this very clearly: *"Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where [the apostles] were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."* [Acts 2:2-4] Pentecost marks the first Christian community's baptism in the Holy Spirit. The audible and visible phenomena (noise, tongues of fire, languages) are signs of the active presence of the Spirit. The joyful apostles and disciples become ministers, servants of the proclamation of the Gospel to every race and culture. And the Church proudly sings *"A mighty wind has filled the house of the Apostles; God's wondrous deeds are proclaimed in every tongue. God Himself gives His people strength and power."* We are no less lucky than the Apostles: the same Power is given to us, for us to bear witness to God.

## BREATH OF LOVE

What would our world be like, without the presence of the Spirit? It would be lifeless. The Spirit that hovered above the waters at creation continues to give life. He renews all things. In my prayers I often ask that we welcome the Spirit of God in the depths of our souls: Spirit of Wisdom, Spirit of Knowledge and of Counsel, Spirit of Strength, Spirit of Understanding, Spirit of Love and of Adoration. Along with all the young people I have the joy of confirming I sing the words of Richard Vital: *"Come, Spirit of God, Spirit of Life, come transform my heart in a fire of joy. Come like a fresh breeze, like a friend, come that I may witness to my faith! Through the marvellous gift of your Spirit, I shall take responsibility for my life, and if I ever forget my commitment, remain with me, Spirit of Jesus. Through the marvellous gift of your Spirit, I shall be accountable for my choices, and if I were to forget to remain faithful, Spirit of Jesus, stay with me. Through the marvellous gift of your Spirit, I shall be transformed into a true disciple, and if I were ever to forget to pray to you, Spirit of Jesus, remain in me."* Breath of Life, remain in us. Breath of Life, thank You.

Have a good week!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (253) (25 November 1998)