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We are now entering "ordinary time". Sounds like a new revised railway timetable! The more formal Churches divide the year into seasons: *Advent and Epiphany, Lent and Easter and Pentecost* or "ordinary time", which extends from the first Sunday after Pentecost to the Sunday before Advent. A structured church calendar tries to balance our engagement with the whole of Christian life, but we should be wary of two distractions. First, a structured church calendar can be superficial, touching on all subjects lightly, never taking us into a deeper understanding of God, leaving unresolved questions in our mind.

Second, the church calendar includes venerating *saints*, which distracts us from **worshipping** God, **learning** from His Son Jesus Christ, and being **obedient** to the leading of the Holy Spirit; reverencing to the point of worshipping "saints", is a big distraction from worshipping God.

Last Sunday we were introduced to the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, the Father would send the Holy Spirit, so it is good to know Him. Come to think of it, we have a one-sided relationship with the Holy Spirit: He knows everything about us, but we know so very little about Him!

During our introduction to the Holy Spirit last Sunday, we learned:

**First**, the Holy Spirit is a person who does everything a person does: He listens, speaks, feels emotions, and has a mind to take decisions.

**Second**, the Holy Spirit did not suddenly appear after Jesus. He existed before Creation, **brooding** over the dark void, as *caretaker-custodian*, watching for signs of God's life cracking through.

The **Third** and final thing we examined was that the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father,

- who will **never leave us**<sup>1</sup>
- who will **teach** us and **remind** us everything Jesus taught.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:16

<sup>2</sup> John 14:26

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- who is the Spirit of Truth, and therefore, **testifies (speaks the truth) about Jesus.**<sup>3</sup>

Now we know **who** the Holy Spirit is, let's explore His **work**, what the Holy Spirit does.

But before we do that, there is one thing we should clarify: the Holy Spirit is not separate from God; He is an integral part of God in the same way that Jesus is an integral part of God.

The late Nabeel Qureshi<sup>4</sup>, the only son of a devout and loving Muslim family, once declared,

*I left Islam because I studied Muhammad's life.  
I accepted the Gospel because I studied Jesus' life,*

During a Q&A at a gathering, Nabeel was asked to explain the Trinity. The standard Christian definition of the **three-in-one** reminded him of three flavours of ice cream in one dish.

His description (not definition) of the Trinity is the best ever. He said,

God is one in being and three in person.

**'What'** you are is your being.

**'Who'** you are is your person.

We are one in being (*human being*) and one in person (*I am Kalyan*), but only God can be one in being and three in person: His Being is GOD, and only God exist in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If we can accept that the Holy Spirit is a person in the Godhead, then we can appreciate His work.

The first thing about the work of the Holy Spirit is that it is **progressive**. God doesn't unload on us, everything He knows, thinks and does, and

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<sup>3</sup> John 15:26

<sup>4</sup> Died September 2017. Author of the best selling book "Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus"

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says *Now I have given you everything I have; you go and figure it out.* God as a loving Father, knows how much each of His children can learn and absorb at any point in time, and so He patiently teaches us what each of us needs for our stage of growth. A wise teacher doesn't teach nuclear physics to his five-year-old. A wise teacher will teach a child the A-B-C's, before teaching them how to read and how to understand. A wise teacher will teach a child the numbers before teaching number bonds and the multiplication tables.

As the child grows, depending on their interest, a wise teacher will take them deeper into the subject of their interest.

The Holy Spirit is this wise-teacher, counsellor and guide, who feeds us on the Word of God, starting as a mother would feed a suckling infant at the start of their journey of life; then as we grow, helps us value the Word of God, teaches us how to read it, then helps us understand the person of God and the extent of His love, moving onto *what is faith and why is it important, what is prayer and how should we pray*, all the basics, before we begin to grapple with big words and ideas like salvation, redemption, eschatology (!).

Peter tells the Church, *Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation.*<sup>5</sup>

Paul tells the Church in Corinth, *Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though ... you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger.*<sup>6</sup>

The work of the Holy Spirit is **progressive**, leading us into a deeper relationship with God through the life of Jesus, and He takes each of us, from our individual place, and at our own pace in our journey of life.

The **second** thing about the work of the Holy Spirit is that it is **personal**.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 2:2 New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

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As we noted last Sunday, the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, or energy, nor is it a wisp of smoke, and certainly not a transparent ghost-like apparition who appears and disappears at will. Jesus said, *"When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all Truth; He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*<sup>7</sup>

This is comforting truth: if you believe Jesus came from God to reconcile us to the Father, then you must accept, the Holy Spirit has made His home in you. His work, ***if you will let Him***, is to come up with a bespoke, tailor-made, personalised journey plan, to take you into a deeper relationship with God. He knows what you are feeling and guides you through God's Word, sometimes through other believers, sometimes through circumstances unique to you.

He knows what you need to know, and when you need to know it. His aim is to make you Holy (not perfect) in thought, word, and deed, that you might think God's thoughts, speak God's words, and do what God does. When you don't know how to pray, the Spirit prays for you in ways that you don't understand<sup>8</sup>; so too thoughts, words and deeds.

The important thing is that Holy Spirit will do all this and much, much more, but ***only if*** you want to be fed by the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will not force-feed you and will not offer you anything other than the Word of God, designing a personalised diet plan (like *Weight Watchers*) suited to your needs, to feed on word of God.

**Finally**, the work of the Holy Spirit is to help us focus on Christ and glorify Christ, because this is the only way Truth can be revealed to us.

In one of His discourses with His disciples, Jesus said, *I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. But when the Friend (Guide, Counsellor) comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all Truth. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out*

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<sup>7</sup> John 16:13

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:26

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*of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honour me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.'*<sup>9</sup>

The Holy Spirit's role is not to glorify Himself, but Christ. He does not call attention to Himself, but to Christ. He does not lead us to focus on our experiences, but on Christ. When people, churches and denominations continually emphasise the Holy Spirit and their supposed experiences in the Spirit, they are not in sync with the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **The work of the Holy Spirit exalts (gives high honour to) Jesus Christ, and He helps us do the same.**

The best thing about the work of the Holy Spirit is, at no time can He be distracted from the purpose of God. He is accountable to God, to make sure that God's plan of restoring this creation, which has fallen prey to satan, will be accomplished. He knows that God's Son Jesus, left Heaven of His own free will, to come face-to-face with satan, surrender to his demand that Jesus (therefore God) dies, so that satan can make a bid to be God. **And was satan ever mistaken!**

So, the work of the Holy Spirit is **progressive**, feeding us on God's Word, first as mother's milk to build a bond with the Father, weaning us off onto formula milk and working our way into chewing and digesting complex meals.

The work of the Holy Spirit is **personal**; He feeds us with God's Word, through personalised diet plans, suited to our individual needs.

Finally, the Holy Spirit's work is to point us to Christ, and teach us to glorify Christ, and He is able to do this, because it is all He does - to give all glory to Christ, because no one has ever come onto satan's turf and defeated him.

Let me leave you with this I read in the news this week.

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<sup>9</sup> John 16:14-15 The Message (MSG)

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Jaelene Hinkle played Defender in the American Women's football team, and she was **the** best.

A year ago, she was selected to play against Norway and Sweden. When the team shirts were given out, she refused to wear them because the shirt numbers were rainbow coloured.

"I felt convicted in my spirit that it wasn't my job to wear it," she said. She was "very disappointed" to give up "a little girl's dream", has not been named in a US squad since.

On Wednesday this past week she was booed when her name was read out at a game, following an interview broadcast on the Christian Broadcasting Network, at which she spoke for the first time, about her decision. Jaelene said, *"I gave myself three days to just seek and pray and determine what [God] was asking me to do in this situation. I'm essentially giving up the one dream, and I'm saying no to it. It was very disappointing. That's where the peace turns to disappointment, because I knew in my spirit I was doing the right thing. Just because you are being obedient, it doesn't make it easy."*

***Just because you are being obedient, it doesn't make it easy***, which is the reason why the Holy Spirit is God's gift to us. Not because the Holy Spirit will make things easy, but through the progressive revelation of God, the Holy Spirit gave Jaelene a personal response, ***not to feel good about her decision***, but to glorify Christ in all she did.

How can we tell the Holy Spirit is at work in Jaelene's life? By the visible ***"fruit of the Spirit"*** in her life. Paul tells the Church in Galatia, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*<sup>10</sup>

**AMEN**

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<sup>10</sup> Galatians 5:25