

Pentecost Sunday
June 4, 2017, Year A
Father Mike Holloran

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Well, speaking of the Holy Ghost, I looked him up in the Catechism, and, my, the Spirit of God, Who is God, is busy.

+ At creation, before Day One, the Spirit of God hovered like a wind over the waters of the abyss.

+ On Day One, when God said "Let there be light", His Spirit, like a breath, carried forth the creating Word.

+ God blew into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, making him a living being. In Hebrew, breath and spirit are two ways of translating the same word, "ruah". Even in English we hear "spirit" in the word "respiration".

+ God inspired the prophets to speak and the writers of Scripture to write; "inspired" because the Spirit was in them and they were in the Spirit.

+ Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and at the epiclesis of the Mass we ask God to send His Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine that they may become the body and blood of Christ His Son.

+ At his baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, after which he began to proclaim the Gospel and work great signs.

+ He told Nicodemus that the Spirit could give a person a new birth.

+ When Jesus had accomplished his mission on earth he breathed his last and gave over the Spirit.

+ On the day he rose he breathed into his disciples the Holy Spirit so that, anchored in his peace, they might bring the whole human race into that safe harbor by the forgiveness of sin.

+ Jesus continued to instruct his disciples through the Holy Spirit for forty days more, up to his ascension, and promised that the Spirit would continue to be with them, would empower them, and guide them into all truth.

+ At Pentecost the Spirit came to them again, this time not in the quiet of a forty day study but as a driving wind, as flames of fire, driving them out of their locked room to proclaim the gospel to every people in every language.

Yes, the Holy Spirit of God, Who is God, is busy indeed; active, activating, giving life, entering in, making his presence known and felt-- sweet refreshment-- coolness in the heat-- warmth in the cold-- divine light shining in our hearts inspiring faith, inspiring prayer, prompting us to recognize the grandeur of God charging the world.

Which takes us back to the poem with which I began, entitled "God's Grandeur". It was written in 1877 by Gerard Manley Hopkins, an Anglican convert to the Catholic Church who then joined the Jesuits. They assigned him to education and parish work, but poetry kept sliding out sideways, for which we can thank God. Who remembers his lesson plans today? He's known for his creative use of language, so some explanation might be helpful.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God, like with electricity; or like with oil, so full that it oozes out. So why don't people notice? Why don't they recognize (reck) his sovereignty (his rod)?

"Why do men then now not reckon his rod?" Because industrious man only sees the world as something to use and improve, smearing it with his trade and toil.

But just as the natural world has a deep reserve of life (the forest will reclaim the shopping malls, mark my word!); and just as the world darkens when the light departs westward but brightens again when the sun appears again in the east; so is the Holy Spirit always fresh, deep-down alive; like a dove on her nest broods new life with warm breast, then takes flight in an instant on bright wings-- ah! the sudden flash of recognition: God's grandeur shining out through the work of His hands.

– reread the poem--