

**ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ**



**Pastoral Letter for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
25/26 May 2024**

My brothers and sisters, I often smile whenever the words from the musical ‘Sweet Charity’ come to mind:

And the rhythm of life is a powerful beat,
Puts a tingle in your fingers and a tingle in your feet.

I say this because sometimes I think they can be applied to the rhythm of the life of the Church, the life of prayer and celebration that we follow. This, too, has a powerful beat and can give us renewed energy for life.

Today we stand at a wonderful moment in that rhythm of life. Last Sunday we celebrated and sang of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Today we stand in awe before the majesty of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Next Sunday we rejoice in the gift of the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, the most holy sacrament. I would like to ponder on these three great feasts and the rhythm of life that echoes through them.

But it's hard to know where to start.

Without a doubt the high point of this dance of faith comes at the end, at the climax of our lives. I'm sure you will recall the words of the lovely hymn ‘How great thou art’. Its last verse takes us to the climax of life, when we shall be taken home, into the presence of God and filled with joy. Then come the words:

Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim ‘My God how great thou art!’

This is the final act of our life, and its true beginning. Only in adoration will we be fulfilled, overflowing with joy, caught up in true rapture before the beauty and majesty of God.

This is what we reach out to celebrate today on this Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, the wonder of God, the constant flow of creative love and mercy, of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is, as it were, the final chord of our dance, a chord which vibrates and resonates through all eternity.

But the rhythm of life is not so simple nor majestic. For in the present moment, as often as not, we struggle to find the right steps, to stay with our dance partners, to combine the new and the old, the traditional and the creative. This is where we need another part of the wonder of faith we are celebrating just now: the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Like the best music teacher, or dance tutor, the Holy Spirit, given to each of us and to the Church, opens for us a deeper understanding of our faith and the courage to apply its truths to our daily lives. The Spirit comes to us in prayer, in quietness, often in the slow movements of life, which contain pathos and sadness as well as profound joy and brightness. The Spirit is given to the Church so that we may move in a graceful unity of purpose in a world so fragmented and bewildered.

At times the Holy Spirit has been compared to rain. It goes like this: rain is always the same, whether in Spain or elsewhere. But rain helps to produce a multitude of different flowers, different fruits, different trees - all the richness of the natural world. So too in us. The Holy Spirit helps to bring to fruit all the different gifts that each of us has been given. And these gifts are given so that the real richness of the life of the Church can be seen and the gifts of every person become part of the beauty of our mission among people. The gifts each one of you has received are needed for this purpose and treasured in the sight of God. So we pray: 'Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love!'

This wondrous gift of the Holy Spirit is the outpouring of the Blessed Trinity. It is the flow of love between Father and Son, Creator and Word of Truth, now lifting up all things, back to the throne of God, to that 'humble adoration' in which we find all fulfilment.

So now I come to the third part of this triple celebration.

The rhythm of life, its music and dance, is demanding and at times very tiring. We cannot dance, as it were, on an empty stomach. To sustain us we need to be nourished, to be fed! And so, next Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the precious Body and Blood of the Lord. Here is our food of life, our nourishment for the journey. Here we are filled with thanksgiving - the meaning of the word 'Eucharist' - for this banquet of life, the food we eat, makes us part of what we receive, the Body of Christ. Then we can give ourselves to the deepest rhythm of life, the demanding beat of love and self-sacrifice which Christ himself has spelt out for us.

We know the steps of this dance: a daily call to be forgetful of our own pressing needs in order to meet those of others, those who depend on us, those who have so few resources of their own. We know how these steps lead steadily towards a deeper love and a maturity of sight, seeing beyond the moment and just occasionally glimpsing the horizons of eternity that lie before us. Remember the words of the traditional hymn 'Sweet Sacrament Divine':

In thy far depths doth shine
Thy Godhead's majesty.

Yes, every time we take part in the celebration of the Mass, kneeling in the presence of Christ in this Sacrament, we are anticipating that final act of worship, when we shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim 'my God how great thou art!'

In these three great feasts, then, we can grasp the richness and beauty of our faith: the majesty of God into whose presence we are called, the vitality of the Holy Spirit stirring in us the possibility of holiness, and the strength of Jesus given to us in the most Holy Eucharist. This is a cause of great joy, to be shared by all the people, with your children, with your neighbours, at any time and in any place. For this I give great thanks to God and to you, too, for the witness you give and the constant support of your prayers.

May God bless you all.

+ Vincent Nichols

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster