

## Beer and Spirits

In my early days as a priest, I was sad to lose a member of our community. He was very much into 'spirituality', and his selective view of Christianity wasn't helped by the discovery that the priest brewed his own beer. Well, he might have been right about the unworthiness of his priest, but his notion of spirituality was not Christian. He, like many in our society, seemed to regard spirituality as something separated from, elevated above, or even totally opposed to, the everyday sweat of our lives as humans with bodies.

True Christian teaching is different. The source of our spirituality is the Holy Spirit: God as he came to us at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1), and Orthodox Christians pray to the Holy Spirit, with these words:

'O Heavenly King, Comforter, who is present everywhere and fills all things; the treasure house of blessings and giver of life; come and abide in us, clean us from everything impure and save our souls; you who are good'.

When we read in Acts how the Holy Spirit came to the first Christians, it wasn't at a particularly romantic time: it was around nine o'clock in the morning. It wasn't in a very promising situation: they were hiding behind locked doors, fearing arrest. It wasn't something emotionally subjective: it had been prophesied for hundreds of years (Joel 2:28) and promised by Our Lord (John 15:26). It wasn't their own private experience or personal property: they rushed out and told everyone in many languages. So we see that, as in the Orthodox prayer, the Holy Spirit is for everyone, everywhere, and for all times.

Yes, the world may apply the word 'spiritual' to beautiful music, inspiring literature, romantic love, or feelings for a golden sunset; but these are just fleeting glimpses of the work of the Holy Spirit who is 'present everywhere and fills all things'. This Spirit is as much in the sound of a suckling child, as it is in beautiful music. It lives in the kind words of a neighbour, as much as in inspiring literature. It connects us with every human being, not just the romantic 'love of my life'. It calls us to see God in our neighbour, not just in a golden sunset; for God sees no one as ugly.

That is why choosing to reject the Holy Spirit is choosing total death (Matthew 12:31).

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