

Tend the Flame

My wife and I are privileged to spend a good portion of our summers on Manitoulin Island, and a big part of that experience is the friendship and camaraderie shared around a campfire.

Each evening people take turns hosting the fire and everyone is invited. Stories and memories are shared and friendships are nourished. This year was very different as there was a fire ban, which seemed to last most of the summer. We still congregated in the evenings but the whole experience was changed because we were not sitting together in the light of a glowing fire. The social dynamic was somehow different and it was the solace of a warm fire that was the missing ingredient.

How often do we feel that hollow emptiness that comes when we forget that the source and light of our lives is the fire of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the love of the trinity that we are invited to bask in each day. My grace is sufficient for the day, not the week or the month, but the day! If our day begins with prayer, then we can take the moments it takes to centre ourselves before the fire of God's love.

Fire needs three things to exist. Now here comes the grade three-science lesson. As a teacher for many years it's impossible not to grab what I used to call a teachable moment.

Fire needs spark that, with fuel, creates a flame. If oxygen is present then the process leads to a roaring fire. In a spiritual sense the spark could be likened to our first encounter with God or our turning towards Him in conversion. When we see God for who he is, then the spark is lit. Not all sparks create fire. Fuel is necessary and in this case, the fuel is the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit. Prayer and an open grateful heart are the oxygen that breathes life into the fire of our walk with God. Without prayer we miss the opportunities to grow in faith that our Vincentian walk provides for us. Each time we encounter God in the face of the people we visit, we feed the flame and warm our hearts. Each time we take the moments that begin our day and sit with God and his word we open our hearts to his will.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus were downtrodden and saddened by the events in Jerusalem. Jesus lifted their spirits and put a new flame of love in their hearts. May we, as the disciples, be able to say, "Were not our hearts burning within us?"

God has called us, like Moses, to the burning bush to see something mysterious, the fire that can't be quenched. Like Moses we realize that we are on holy ground and must, in spite of our fear, draw closer to this fire. May all of us draw nearer in gratitude to our Lord, who continues to warm our spirits and lead us closer to the abiding fire of God's Love.

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