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Hymn to the Holy Spirit

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HYMN TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mary Abigail Coleman

The Holy Spirit is the helper that Christ sent to his disciples on Pentecost Sunday. “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:2-4). Just as it descended upon the disciples centuries ago, so does it descend upon us. As we strive to love God and be Christ to those around us, through his grace, God sends us the Holy Spirit.

We must keep ourselves open to the Holy Spirit. As Pope Francis said in his Pentecost homily in 2015, “Closing oneself off from the Holy Spirit means not only a lack of freedom; it is a sin. There are many ways one can close oneself off to the Holy Spirit: by selfishness for one’s own gain; by rigid legalism – seen in the attitude of the doctors of the law to whom Jesus referred as “hypocrites”; by neglect of what Jesus taught; by living the Christian life not as service to others but in the pursuit of personal interests; and in so many other ways.”¹

This simple poem from St. Augustine of Hippo is a perfect prayer to stay open to the Holy Spirit and call upon it to help one

be more holy.

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit,
That my words may, too, be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit,
That I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit,
That I may defend all that is holy.
Protect me, Holy Spirit,
That I may always be holy.²

When I wrote this song, the music flowed out from me. It was no work of my own. The Holy Spirit inspired it. The simple melody and homophonic harmonies accent the text and the heart-felt prayer of the faithful.

The long note duration at the beginning of the phrase lends a pleading nature as we call upon the Holy Spirit to come and fill us with more holiness. The movement of the music falls within the rhythm of the syllables. The important words are stressed - breathe, spirit, thoughts, holy. The short rises and falls of the melody lends a contemplative nature to the music.

The culmination comes at the point where the text cries out, “Attract my heart”. The voices rise and widen, pleading for the Holy Spirit to help us love what is holy. This is the ultimate desire we should have because God is all that is holy. In our feeble humanity, we are unable to do this on our own. So we call upon the Holy Spirit and grace to help us.

Notes:

¹ Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 25, 2015, Vatican website

² Prayer sequence for the Solemnity of Pentecost

Hymn to the Holy Spirit

Commissioned by Marty Strong on the occasion of Pentecost

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

MaryAbigail Coleman (b. 1993)

May 2015

♩ = 75

SOPRANO
Breathe in - to me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my thoughts may all be

ALTO
Breathe in - to me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my thoughts may all be

TENOR
Breathe in - to me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my thoughts may all be

BASS
Breathe in - to me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my thoughts may all be

Piano
Rehearsal only

♩ = 75

ho - ly. Move in me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my work may, too, be

ho - ly. Move in me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my work may, too, be

ho - ly. Move in me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my work may, too, be

ho - ly. Move in me, Ho - ly Spi - rit, That my work may, too, be

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HOLY SPIRIT

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ho - ly. — At-tract my heart, Ho-ly Spi-rit, That I may love on - ly what is ho - ly.

ho - ly. — At-tract my heart, Ho-ly Spi-rit, That I may love on - ly what is ho - ly.

ho - ly. — At-tract my heart, Ho-ly Spi-rit, That I may love on - ly what is ho - ly.

ho - ly. — At-tract my heart, Ho-ly Spi-rit, That I may love on - ly what is ho - ly.

ff *pp sub* *ff* *pp sub* *ff* *pp sub* *ff* *pp sub*