

Singing Our Faith
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time — January 27, 2019

Come Down, O Love Divine



1. Come down, O Love di - vine, Seek now this soul of
2. O let it free - ly burn, Till earth - ly pas - sions
3. And so the yearn - ing strong, With which the soul will



mine, And vis - it it with your own ar - dor glow - ing;
turn To dust and ash - es in its heat con - sum - ing;
long, Shall far out - pass the pow' r of hu - man tell - ing;



O Com - fort - er, draw near, With - in my heart ap -
And let your glo - rious light Shine ev - er on my
No soul can guess Love's grace Till it be - come the



pear, And kin - dle it, your ho - ly flame be - stow - ing.
sight, And clothe me round, the while my path il - lum - ing.
place Where - in the Ho - ly Spir - it makes a dwell - ing.

Text: *Discendi, Amor Santo*; Bianco da Siena, d.1434; tr. by Richard F. Littledale, 1833–1890
Tune: DOWN AMPNEY, 66 11 D; Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958

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I've noticed two themes running through the readings at Mass for the last several weeks. **1)** As I mentioned last week, we've been hearing in the gospels about Jesus' manifestation, gradually revealing his mission through several events over the course of time. **2)** In the second reading, St. Paul has been speaking about the workings of the Holy Spirit: first at the baptism of Jesus and our own baptism, last week in how the Spirit gives different gifts to each person, and this week how we are united into the Body of Christ by that same Spirit.

A very basic idea to pull from this Sunday's readings is the importance of the Word of God. Both the first reading and the gospel emphasize this with ceremonial readings of scripture. This is echoed in the Responsorial Psalm refrain, "Your words, O Lord, are Spirit and Life."

Jesus' reading in the temple announced his mission...

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.**

As baptized Christians, members of the Body of Christ, and individuals filled with the Gifts of the Spirit...are we furthering Jesus' mission?

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The opening hymn “Come Down, O Love Divine” is a prayer invoking the Holy Spirit. The text is very poetic, requiring a little reflection to get the gist of it. Simply put, the first stanza asks the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. The second stanza goes further, asking the fire of the Spirit to turn our worldliness to ashes. As we will hear on Ash Wednesday - “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The second stanza goes on to recall images of our baptism when we are clothed with Christ and declared a child of Light - “And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.” All of us can recall a time when our faith wasn’t a priority for whatever reason. To contrast, we know how much better our life is with God at the center. And that’s what the last line of the hymn is getting at - “No soul can guess Love’s Grace till it become the place...” We can’t fathom the power of the Holy Spirit until we make room for Him in our heart. When we allow the Spirit speak to us through prayer and the Word of God, our gifts and mission are more aligned with the will of God, and we are true sharers in the mission of Jesus.

Stephen Eros

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Historical Bits about “Come Down, O Love Divine”

The hymn tune “Down Ampney” was written by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. Most hymn tunes get their names from people or places, as does this one. Down Ampney is a small village in Gloucestershire, England where Vaughan Williams was born. The text is taken from an Italian hymn, “Discendi, amor santo,” by the 15th century mystic Bianco da Siena. The original is in the form of a *laude*, a sacred song written in the vernacular - hence, Italian, not Latin. It was translated into English in 1867 by R.F. Littledale.