

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, 2008

*“The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world;
and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice.”*
(Wisd. 1:7)

In these days, the Holy Ghost shows that He is present and active amongst the souls of the faithful. This was made very clear at the world youth congress which took place in Australia this week — the fact was reluctantly confirmed by the world media which was determined to deprive souls of any knowledge of the glorious wonders of God which that continent witnessed over these past few days.



The theme of the Congress was the Power of the Holy Spirit. It opened on Tuesday last with a Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit celebrated by Cardinal Pell, several cardinals and many bishops including the Archbishop of Dublin, before a congregation of many hundreds of thousands of dedicated youth; all eager and willing to be witnesses to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. After welcoming the youth in the various main languages, the Cardinal welcomed the English speaking youth — Ireland being first on the list, “whose ancestors first planted the faith on this Continent”.

The late Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson, in his novel *The Dawn of All*, describes a scene of the Pope coming up the Thames, on the Royal Barge. Pope Benedict's arrival at the Youth Congress reminded me of it: he came on a beautiful white ferry-boat on the water, the Papal Flag unfurled at the prow and again on a flag staff on the roof; and there on the fore-deck was the Holy Father on the throne. He was accompanied by Cardinal Pell and several prelates and by many youth as well as civil dignitaries. The scenes of spontaneous joy were indescribable — one had to see it to appreciate the ecstatic welcome of the Vicar of Christ. There followed a liturgical service of prayer and readings, with an address to attentive and dedicated youth.

Yesterday, Saturday, a new altar was consecrated in St Mary's Cathedral. The relics inserted into the altar included those of St Thomas à Becket and St Oliver Plunket, martyrs; the marble altar portrayed a carved image of the dead Christ, based on the Shroud of Turin. The altar was anointed with Chrism whose sweet fragrance and odour signified the sacrifice to be offered there; Solemn Mass followed, celebrated by the Pope. In his address he compared our consecration at Baptism and at

Confirmation and of priests at their Ordination to this dedication of the altar for the praise and worship of God.

The same evening there was a vigil at the open-air site of the great altar of the outdoor celebrations. Imagine hundreds of thousands of youth all carrying lighted candles; a sight stretching as far as the eye could see. The robed choir of men and boys did most of the singing; and a Russian and Ukrainian choir must have had a powerful effect upon all these souls whose hearts were open to welcome the power of the Holy Spirit and eager to bear witness to Christ. Pope Benedict's address emphasised the gifts of the Holy Spirit leading to Unity, Love and Peace; and referring to St Augustine's teaching that God shows Himself as Love through the Holy Spirit through whom we have the gift of the Eternal Spring – the Spring that never runs dry – he pointed out that the action of God's grace can bring about the transformation of individuals, communities and nations — “And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth,”¹ as the scripture and our prayers teach us so often.

Let us think of and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit as we pray for the misguided people of the news media; pray for them we must in the love of the Holy Spirit as we genuinely seek their enlightenment and conversion to the truth who is God. As always we commend ourselves the Blessed Virgin, the holy Mother of Christ and our heavenly Mother, whose powerful prayers will keep us safe and true to the Spirit of Unity, Love and Peace.

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¹ Psalm 104:30