

## The Right Path

We have just returned from a holiday in Suffolk, a place we have loved and returned to over fifty years. While there we visited Minsmere, a favourite place for bird watching. When we decided to head back to the cafe for lunch, we set off on what we thought was a familiar path, but began to suspect, the further we walked, that something wasn't quite right! However, we still carried on until we eventually reached a point when we knew we were heading in completely the wrong direction, with the place we wanted to reach far away in the distance. Initially I didn't want to turn back, but exhausted though I was, knew we had to if we were to reach our desired destination.

This experience led me to think about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, who is described by Jesus in John's gospel as 'the Spirit of truth' who will guide us 'into all truth.' Again in Psalm 25:2 the psalmist says: 'Direct me in your way God and teach me your paths. Encourage me to walk in your truth and teach me your paths since you are the God who saves me.' Richard Rohr describes the Holy Spirit as 'the loving immensity of God's presence with us.' It is a remarkable, mind blowing fact that the essence of the character of God and Christ is revealed to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit who is able to guide and lead us, and is able to guide and lead us and impart wisdom and compassion, awakening our souls to the mind of Christ. We are being called to live openly and honestly seeing the world, others and ourselves through his eyes. The Holy Spirit dwells quietly within each of us and permeates the whole of life in what Frederick Buechner describes as the 'subterranean presence of God.'

There is a sense in which the Spirit is both hidden and yet present, being felt, not in a dramatic way, but in the fruits that grow in our lives of peace, love and compassion, and discovered and present in the many small events and encounters of our everyday lives. For example, on holiday we met a lady outside a fruit shop, who during our conversation revealed her husband had had a stroke only four weeks ago. We ended up listening to her, hugging her before going on our way. Ronald Rolheiser talks about how the Spirit never overpowers us, but which 'has inside of it a gentle, unremitting imperative, a compulsion, which invites us to draw upon it. And if we do, it gushes up as an infinite stream that instructs us, nurtures us and fills us with life and energy.' {*Rolheiser podcast*}

However, for many in our world God goes unnoticed and ignored, leading to a growing disconnection from what is truth, with a reliance solely on their own judgement, growing further and further away from 'the ultimate stream of love and life.' As human beings we have a huge capacity for self deception and belief in our lies, perceived and unremittingly held onto as the truth. There are time in our own lives as Christians when we keep on walking down a path that we sense is taking us in the wrong direction, but not turning back, deceiving ourselves into thinking we are on the right course. We too can easily ignore or be too busy to respond to the beckoning, nudging promptings of the Holy Spirit. We are being called daily, even moment by moment, to draw upon the always available living presence of the Holy Spirit at work within us, and who Jesus said, 'will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.' The Spirit continues to grow and develop our understanding as we learn to walk in His truth as we come to know the 'fullness of joy' that comes when He makes known to us 'the path of life'

**Leading into the silence** extract from St Patrick's *Lorica*

I arise today  
Through God's strength to pilot me  
God's might to uphold me  
God's wisdom to guide me  
God's hand to guard me  
God's shield to protect me  
God's host to save me

**Leading from the silence** prayer by Christine Valters Paintner

Spirit of renewing life  
you breathed into me in my very first moment,  
invigorate me with your gift of energy and newness.  
Continue to breathe expansively in me,  
inviting me to a vision for what's possible in my life.