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2008

Wind, Breath, and Spirit

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Wind, Breath, and Spirit

We observe the wind's direction, temperature, and intensity, but we do not direct it. We continually breathe in and out, inhaling fresh air and then exhaling. The Spirit of God moves in and around us completely beyond our control, but more life-giving and favorable to us than the finest quality of fresh air that we can breathe.

Though God is not to be equated with wind or breath, the movement of air about us can help us to recognize the equally invisible but readily perceived movements of the Spirit. We have weather charts of wind-flow, and pictures of cloud formations, but we do not see wind or air, however much we observe and feel its effects. We do not view God with our eyes, but we have the capability of becoming familiar with the continual and pervasive actions of God in our persons and in our environment.

Sailors are always concerned about the effects of wind upon the waters, and many of us on land who plan to go outdoors are also careful to attend to the wind's speed and direction. If we know something about the forces in the air that we are to encounter, we can make adjustments that will enable us to benefit directly or avoid negative consequences. As spiritual beings, we learn through experience that the wind of the Spirit is never an "ill wind" and always a beneficial movement that we can await or actively seek. Spirit-winds guide our thoughts and help us in making decisions.

However winds blow, we cannot store them up to use at another time, and we cannot hold on to the consolations and peace that often indicate the movements of God's Spirit within us. But we can keep a kite or a sail boat ready for use whenever the appropriate wind conditions arise, and we can likewise make ready to go along with our inspirations whenever they occur. Though we cannot be certain of when some favorable winds will come again, the grace and peace of God will recur whenever we need them. Some of us may at times pray about the weather, as some might seek a wind to blow away the mist. More frequently and with greater effect, most of us turn to God and ask for help with making decisions, and experience the quiet movement within us that provides the clarity we seek.

The movements of God's love within us and about us can arise as quickly and at times as surprisingly as do breezes – and from any direction. When a breath of wind comes up, we must decide whether it is better for us to resist and move away, or to accept and adjust.

When we recognize the direction that God's gentle suggestions offer, our best interests are always served by going in the direction of the movement.

Many of us have learned a process that is beneficial for physical health as well as spiritual: breathing in and out consciously and slowly. Blowing out every bit of air that we can, leads immediately to drawing in a deep and full breath of fresh air. The benefits are relatively immediate: a lessening of anxiety or anger and an increase of peace and of purpose. The Spirit of God is involved in both parts of such exercise, giving us life as bodily persons dependent upon breathing, and enlivening us as persons of spirit.

Breathing exercises can easily become prayer. We can, for example, imagine Jesus breathing his Holy Spirit upon us as disciples. The consequences of receiving the Spirit of Jesus are quite valuable: courage, clarity of purpose, and an ever greater capacity for love – both giving and receiving.

As with the winds and with The Spirit, the initiative is not ours. Though we have no personal relationship with either wind or breath, we have, with God's Spirit. God does not act arbitrary, but changes direction or force wholly according to each one's needs for guidance, direction, purpose, and life. When we pray, "Come Holy Spirit," we are inviting the love of God to move in and around us not according to our directions, as if we already knew what was best for us. Rather, we seek to be inspired, so that we might recognize the indications from God as to what is better for us and for all.

Breathe in the Spirit, and let that loving wind guide us.