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The Vicar writes WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Dear Friends,

God, yes; Jesus, yes; the Holy Spirit, we are not so sure! Perhaps that is why Sunday 22nd May, when the Church throughout the world celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit, will be, in many places, a rather luke-warm celebration.

Judging by what people have said to me over the years, some think that the Holy Spirit is a vague impersonal force, others that he is a frightening spook, others that he is of no consequence today. In fact the bible makes it very clear, and the experience of many Christians confirms, that the Holy Spirit is none less than God's own Spirit. Far from being ineffective and impersonal, he is a personal being. The Spirit of the Father and the Son, ⁴⁸⁴ everything that Jesus was to his disciples the Holy Spirit can be to us; and more, because he can live within us always. Jesus in St. John's gospel called the Holy Spirit, "another helper" and he has been called by the Bishop ^{John Taylor} of Winchester, appropriately, "The ~~Go-~~ ^{Go-}Between God."

Consequently, it is the Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus real for people today and, as they put their faith in ~~Christ~~ ^{him}, so the Holy Spirit enables them to follow him and serve him. It is the Holy Spirit who brings Christians together in God's love, within a church such as St. Mary's and in the different denominations and traditions. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to love other people with God's love, even our enemies. It is the Holy Spirit who shows us that we are sinners and depend on God for forgiveness and healing, through Christ's death on the cross. It is the Holy Spirit who causes spiritual re-birth in an individual and renewal in the Church. The Holy Spirit produces the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control in peoples lives. It is the Spirit by whom we receive God's gifts for ministry in and through the Church, ordained and lay alike.

Most people find it difficult to pray. I know I do! It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to pray and turns our inadequate groans into praises. Does our worship sometimes seem dry and lifeless? It is the Holy Spirit who can make it worthy and living worship. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us every day, teaching us and bringing the scriptures to life.

It is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us, enabling us to grow as Christians and to become the people God created us to be. It is the Holy Spirit who challenges Christians to shine like lights in the world to the glory of God the Father, sharing their faith with others and involving themselves in the world, in love and service.

God wants us to take his Holy Spirit seriously; the Spirit of the Father and of Jesus Christ. He wants us to be open to the Holy Spirit, being filled by him over and over again, as we follow Jesus and give thanks to the Father for the wonderful gift of his Spirit.

With love in Jesus Christ,

Ernest Hepworth.

BOOK REVIEW - RENEWAL IN WORSHIP by The Rt. Revd.
Michael Marshall, Bishop of Woolwich.

That a book on worship, of all subjects, should be written by a former Vicar of All Saints', Margaret Street and published by an Evangelical publishing house, Marshalls, shows how God is bringing his Church together in a new way - His way! The author is Michael Marshall, and that in itself promised well. In fact I was not disappointed.

Here was a fascinating look at Christian worship, in the author's usual racy style. Bishop Michael is not afraid to speak his mind, but he does so with love. I am sure anyone who reads this book will be helped to see their own and the Church's worship afresh. What has become in some cases, unthinking habit and hidebound tradition will be illuminated and, even when you do not agree with Bishop Michael, you will be made to think again.

What is worship? Why do we worship? Is our worship a living and worthy offering to a great God? How does our worship relate to our daily lives and others? These and many other questions Bishop Michael helps us with.

I believe not only our worship as individuals and as a church, but also our whole Christian discipleship will be enriched by this book. It is available from the Church bookstall and is published in paperback.