

This Thursday we come together as a school community to celebrate an All-School Mass at St. Gabriel Church to mark the beginning of the school year. At these moments we call upon the Holy Spirit to come down upon us with His power to guide us on the right path.

We do this in a very special way – the Mass is not your regular weekday Mass, but rather a ‘votive’ Mass of the Holy Spirit, otherwise known as a ‘Red Mass’.

The term ‘Red Mass’ comes from the color of the priest’s vestments, which are red to symbolize fire: the Holy Spirit is often described as fire or flame in the Bible, so the mind is drawn to His purifying action in our lives as we celebrate the mystery of the Mass that He makes possible in our time and space.

Sometimes we struggle to understand the Holy Spirit, and particularly that the Holy Spirit is *as much God* as God the Father and God the Son, but I am going to go one further and argue that, in fact, He is the *most present* to us of all the Persons of the Trinity, because the Holy Spirit’s main job is to reveal Our Lord to us – and in turn Our Lord reveals the Father.

So how is the Holy Spirit closer to us than Our Lord? Well, it is through the Holy Spirit that Our Lord’s life and saving power are made known to us now through the Sacraments of the Church and through the Sacred Scripture and Tradition that He inspired. We are not able to walk and talk with Our Lord like the Disciples were, but we can receive Our Lord at Mass in an even more intimate way. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit protects the Church’s teaching so that, even though she is a hospital for sinners run by sinners, she always teaches the Truth about God and about mankind.

So, you could say that we live in the *Age of the Spirit* – a blessed time in which we are able to receive God Himself into the deepest part of ourselves so that He can transform us from the inside out. It’s that power that we invoke as we celebrate a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit and it’s that power to transform that we ask God to bestow upon our school community at the start of this new year:

Holy Spirit, comes to us as *wind*:  
Blow through our school and whisper to us the Word of God

Holy Spirit, come to us as *fire*:  
Burn away all that separates us from the love of God and neighbor

Holy Spirit, come to us as *water*:  
Make us a channel of grace to cleanse and heal your people.

Holy Spirit, come to us as *dove*:  
Nest in our hearts and make of us a place you are pleased to dwell.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Same Spirit; One God, for ever and ever. Amen.