

## **Donnybrook**

7 September 2021

Our Lady of the Rosary

### **Welcome**

If someone were to say to me, where is the best teaching in the New Testament on the Holy Spirit, prayer and joy, I would unhesitatingly reply the letters of Paul, the Gospel of John and the double volume of Luke-Acts.

### **Steps**

It is, of course, not an accident that all three are found together: the Holy Spirit is the foundation of our prayer and our access to happiness in believing. Both of today's readings illustrate all three.

It might not be immediately obvious in the first reading that the Spirit is active. The story setting is a key. The way the story is told, the ascension has just taken place and Jesus has, in some sense, departed. Pentecost is about to happen – the very next scene. Meanwhile, the community is a prayer and we are given a very complete list of participants, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. The whole community is together, they are at prayer, awaiting the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit to empower them for the proclamation of the Good News and the expansion of what the Acts calls The Way.

That in-between point is exactly where we find ourselves today as a community of faith. Three days ago, there was an opinion piece in the Irish Times by Nicola Brady about the synodal pathway, which is slowly entering our imaginations and step by step becoming a reality. There are both risks and opponents. If it works – and that might be a big if – it could be nothing less than Vatican III, finally. It is not simply a vast consultation, a kind of bureaucratic exercise; it has the potential for a re-launch of the faith project in our times.

If that is to happen, it will be the work of the Holy Spirit. For that to happen, we have to be people of prayer, as in first reading. To help us, a special prayer has been proposed – in fact, it is the same prayer which opened every session of Vatican II.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in Your name.  
With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.  
We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence our actions.  
Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey together to eternal life  
and not stray from the way of truth  
and what is right.  
All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in every place and time,  
in the communion of the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever.  
Amen.