

Water, Fire, and Air rfm

Water, fire, and air are three basic necessities for life on earth, and are in turn symbols for three important signs of a vibrant spiritual life. We depend upon the waters of Baptism, the fire of Jesus, and the breath of the Holy Spirit.

John baptized with water, and said it was Jesus who would baptize with fire. The "skies opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus" (Luke 3:15-22) bringing a new kind of fiery spiritual life into the Messiah. Eventually Jesus breathed upon the disciples and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

No voice can be heard without air to carry its vibrations, and in a similar way we need the breath of the Spirit in our inner being in order to resonate to His promptings. In either case there is only silence in a vacuum.

Elijah challenged the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:21-46) and showed that God's gift of water would not deter His gift of fire. Elijah's offering and sacrifice burned brightly for the glory of God.

When asked about Elijah's coming, Jesus said: "Let me assure you, Elijah has already come" (Mark 9:9-13). Some people thought that John was the Elijah that Jesus mentioned. And similarly, just as Elijah poured water over the offering, John poured the water of Baptism over the Father's sacrifice, and Jesus burned brightly with the fire of the Holy Spirit!

"The voice of the Lord is over the waters" (Ps 29:3). "The voice of the Lord strikes fiery flames" (Ps 29:7).

God anointed Jesus "with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the Devil and God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

God calls, guides, forms and sets his servants as a light so that they might open the eyes of those imprisoned in the darkness of the world (Isaiah 42:6-8).

"Like hands in the clay of the potter, to be molded according to his pleasure, so are we in the hands of our Creator, to be assigned by him our function" (Sir 33:13).

Do we look upon ourselves as servants of God who are being called, formed, and brightened? Are we on fire for the Lord and his good news?

"I have come to light a fire on the earth. How I wish the blaze were ignited" (Luke 12:49).