

The young men who were doing the decorating here in the parish room and sacristy were working late one night this week and so I took over some beers for them. "Oh, I didn't know that vicars could drink," said one of them. In many people's eyes, being a spiritual person means no sex, no drink, and a life exclusively devoted to prayer and service. And even the Catechism would seem to suggest that celibacy is a higher calling than marriage.

But who, or what is the Holy Spirit? *The Spirit of truth who issues from the Father*, the Spirit that *was moving over the waters* at the dawn of time? *Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth* we prayed in the psalm. The agent of creation who embeds himself deep within creation and the divine spark at the centre of every single human soul, the spiritual life is not about denying our physicality, our bodiliness. Our bodies and all the pleasures that go with them are God's gift.

But, the Holy Spirit, this Creator Spirit is also the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of the suffering servant and the crucified Lord. To be spiritual, we, too, must share in that crucifixion. There are things in our lives that must be put to death. There is a path of discipline and self-denial to be trod. But it doesn't mean turning our backs on marriage and family and trying to be all soul and no body.

Pope Francis talks about a human ecology. The oceans are clogged up with excess plastic. The world is awash with weapons.

The climate is heating up and deserts are growing, *fornication, gross indecency, sexual irresponsibility, feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad-temper and quarrels, envy and drunkenness.*

Our personal lives are clogged up and full of rubbish as well. So quick to take offence and fight our corner, flames of hatred burn within us.

Inside we become dried up and withered.

To be a spiritual person doesn't mean turning away from the world or turning away from our own bodies. Being a spiritual person means complete openness to God, a constant attitude of prayer, engaging with God in trying to bring change and renewal, and engaging with our brothers and sisters to discover once more a common language.

Being a spiritual person means *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

And so, yes, I am allowed to drink, but hopefully the only one thing that will make me drunk is the Holy Spirit.

"Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love."