

March 2024



Dear co-labourer,

John 14:18 – ‘I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you’

Jesus’ words to his apostles, the night before his death, herald the coming, and indwelling presence, of the Holy Spirit in all his future followers. At Forte Torre, we’ve been learning of the Spirit’s work; marvelling at his life-giving task of comforting, challenging, nourishing and equipping us in Jesus, to be living active members of his Body. The biblical vision of the Spirit’s ministry in his Church is gloriously *collective*. We *depend* upon his mighty interventions, perceived often over time. This month we share with you how the Spirit has been at work...

1. In our mothers

February proved impossible to foresee: on Sunday 4 February, Susan’s mother ‘fell asleep’, on Sunday 18 February, JP’s mother also died. Very thankful for both our mothers, we are obviously still grieving. Yet immensely grateful to God for having enabled us to accompany them both in their last week of life; by reading and singing Scripture’s promises to them in Christ.

Sue: Mum chose for her funeral service 1 Peter 1:3-9: *‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, he caused us to be born again to a living hope’*. I give great thanks that God in his kindness chose to make Mum his child. She knew that God had generously worked new life in her by the Spirit. Any praise of this kind lady, her cheerful countenance, her smiles, her unfailing commitment to serving others, was due to God’s work in her. Having had the privilege these days of reading mum’s Bible study notes, she wrote, *‘There is still more to experience of a loving faithful God, and when I do leave this world for heaven, the best is yet to be.’* We mourn the passing from this earth of a dear woman of God and look forward to meeting her again.

JP: I was much comforted in seeing how warmly my mother received the word during those last days. How she remembered Scriptures read, wanted to repeat them, and listened to readings and meditations. It was precious evidence of the Spirit having given her the word of life over many years; and comforting her at the end with Christ’s eternal promises. The Spirit-given word is the greatest comfort! This of course does not negate our human grief, which remains real. But in Christ, it is not hopeless grief, but rather FULL of hope! We are grieving, but not despairing.

2. In church life

The preaching series on the Spirit has generated much interest. PRAY we would be a Spirit-filled community, hungry to make Christ known in Bologna.

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Pray our faith would be renewed as Easter reminds us that we are no longer orphans but adopted children of the Father!

There've been some discouragements and difficulties; the hunger to meet daily in prayer is limited, evangelistic zeal seems variable, self-sacrifice not abounding. There feels a greater 'fluidity' in the fellowship; distractions and life difficulties. That said, there are tangible encouragements around new initiatives: a new youth group for the medie (11–14 years), a new language class (Italiano facile) to serve nearby neighbourhoods. Furthermore, we've begun a new monthly service in another district (Bologna Ovest), where members already live. The initiative, coordinated by S (church deacon), represents a first stage (monitored through 2024) towards a potential future plant.

- Great thanks for new club *medie*, the new *Italiano facile* class, the new Sunday initiative *Bologna Ovest*. Pray for faithful, constant leadership of these ministries.
- Prayer for a deeper, self-sacrificial passion amongst Forte Torre members, that translates into intercession for the good of this city and country!
- Pray for a strengthening sense of living church life *collectively*, beyond personal preference and self-interest.



Holy Spirit series

3. Through Applicazione (www.corsiapplicazione.it)

In Applicazione, we've just completed a detailed exegetical study of Romans, followed by 10-15 students (in church and online). Its aim was to impart principles of exposition, as we seek to model rightly handling the Spirit-given word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). Encouraging to see particularly Torricine (Sunday school) leaders gaining new tools for grappling faithfully with God's word. Encouraging too to see others in Italy (around 120 people) following various Applicazione courses, both individually and in church settings. Our next course (April-May) will exegete Psalm 119 in Hebrew, as a further step in equipping present and future Italian Bible teachers.

- Give thanks to those who follow Applicazione courses, sometimes alone and in isolated regions of Italy. Pray the material will be of great spiritual benefit.
- Pray for *Lingue Bibliche 5 (Salmo 119)*, for folk to join the course, and deepen their love for the lifegiving, Spirit-inspired word!

4. Over Easter

During Forte Torre's Easter services, PRAY that as we would look to Christ crucified and raised, in the power of the Spirit, our faith would be renewed as those who are no longer orphans, but adopted children of the Father!

With much love from BO
JP and Sue xx



Applicazione