The two great creeds of Christianity, the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, both proclaim a threefold faith, faith in God the Father, the creator and sustainer of all that is, faith in his Son, Jesus Christ who heals and redeems us, faith in the Spirt, the divine source of holiness and life.

The emphasis in every case is on all that is positive. To proclaim God as the creator, for example, is to affirm that all things come from and depend on God and, because they do, they are, as the Book of Genesis puts it, “very good.”

As true, however, as that is, it is not the whole truth. God’s good creation has been wounded by the presence in it of the destructive power of evil. The war in Ukraine, the gratuitous, racially motived killing of the people in Buffalo, the devastating, heart-breaking murder of 19 school children and two of their teachers in Texas – these and other things like them reveal that power at work in our world. Such things call out for a redeemer and healer, someone who can help us as individuals and as communities to confront and overcome all that would undermine God’s good creation. Jesus came to inspire us to stand with him against all that is negative and destructive in our lives and in the life of the world.

Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus has won for us the forgiveness, mercy and compassion that we all need and seek. Our challenge is to keep alive our awareness of what he has done for us and to make it effective in our lives. It is here that the role of the Spirit is essential.

The Spirit enables us to maintain and foster a living relationship with the risen Christ. Today’s second reading begins with the declaration that “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” It is the Spirit who inspires us to believe in Jesus and in his healing and forgiving presence with us and to deepen our response to him and to his gifts.

The Spirit is at the heart of individual Christian life. It is one thing to read the gospels and the other books of the New Testament and quite another to be touched and moved by what they say. Today’s gospel describes the Spirit as another Advocate, as someone who can speak on our behalf, someone who will remind us of what Jesus said and did and who will lead us into an ever deeper understanding and appreciation of it. Jesus calls the Spirit the Spirit of truth and says that he will lead us into the truth about God and human life.

The presence of the Spirit within us is like that of a seed planted in the soil of our hearts which, given time and nurture, will grow and bring forth the fruit of goodness and virtue. If this is true of us as individuals, it is also true of us as members of the community of faith, the church. Paul comes back repeatedly to this in his letters. More than anyone else, he had a real sense of the Spirit and of his role in the life of the church.

Paul sees the Spirit as the source of multiple gifts. “There are varieties of gifts,” he says, “but the same Spirit; and varieties of services, but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities but the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each,” he adds, “is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

We all have gifts of various kinds, gifts of nature and of grace, gifts that we are called to put at the service of one another, of the church and of the world. Community is at the heart of Christian faith and of Christian life.

The presence of the Spirit in our heart reveals him to be a Spirit of love, joy and patience, of kindness, generosity and gentleness, qualities which can make an enormous difference in our relations to one another.

A distinguishing feature of the role the Spirit played at Pentecost points to another aspect of the Spirit’s presence. The fact that people from so many different countries and speaking such a range of languages hear of Jesus in their own language suggests the universality of the gifts of the Spirit. The Spirit of the creator God hovers over the whole of created reality. It is as such that we are invited to think of him as a Spirit of hope. Alongside much that is negative in the contemporary world, there is also in it a great deal that is good. The Spirit reminds us of this and invites us to build on it.

In addition to being a source of hope, the Spirit is a source of life, of spiritual life, of life of the soul. As the Spirit of the risen Christ, he unites us with him, gradually molding us into his likeness. As the soul of the church, the Spirit is the source of its vitality and energy. We need to learn to trust in, and be open to, the presence of the Spirit in our own lives as well as in the life of the church and of the world.

The Spirit banishes despair and defeatism. He is always with us, inviting us to collaborate with him in renewing the face of the earth.