

# REFERENCE POINT

## NOVEMBER 2020

### The Holy Spirit, Our Librarian

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God. Romans 8:26-27*

It's obvious in the posture. There's a unique brand of sheepish hesitation that might as well announce audibly, "I'm here for the Poetry assignment." The assignment requires students to collect the following: the title and author of a librarian's favorite poem, information on finding poetry in the library's print collection, and a selfie with a librarian. Most students have never asked a librarian for anything like a favorite poem or a selfie. Most of them are a bit tentative as they approach the Research Help Desk (they often come in pairs or small groups – safety in numbers!). They aren't entirely sure where to start. Occasionally, as they pause in indecision, I'll just break the ice by asking, "Assignment for Poetry?" The relief is visible. They don't have to explain the assignment to me. They no longer worry that I will think they are weirdos for requesting selfies with someone they've just met. They know I already know what they need.

The navigation of reference interviews may not always be quite so clear-cut, but the same elements often emerge. We encounter patrons who approach for help without the exact vocabulary to define their request or a complete understanding of their information need. That's ok, though, isn't it? As librarians, we know the kinds of information

they need even if "subject encyclopedia article" or "peer-reviewed research" aren't the words they use. We have the advantage of knowing our library's resources, and we develop familiarity with the requirements of the research projects typically assigned by various faculty members. Even without the perfect words to express their requests or a sophisticated understanding of the resources available, patrons find what they need when they ask us.

As we approach the Spiritual Help Desk in prayer, we can have full confidence in the Holy Spirit as our Reference Librarian. We may not be entirely sure where to start. We may not know what to ask or have sufficient words to describe what we need. That's ok, though, isn't it? The Spirit knows our hearts and our needs fully. The Spirit perfectly comprehends the will of God in each of our life's assignments. And the Spirit is completely aware of all of the resources of God that are available to us. We can simply come. The Spirit already knows what we need.

*Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16*



—Julie Sweeney

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