

### **I Believe in the Holy Spirit**

“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” John 14:26.

One of the most unique and fundamental properties of the Christian faith is the concept of the Trinity. The Trinity is one God consisting of three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Throughout time God has revealed himself to the world; first in the Old Testament, then in the person of Jesus Christ and finally as the Holy Spirit in the days of the Church proceeding Pentecost. The Catechism of the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup> (CCC) says: “The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father. The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus’ glorification reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity” (244). It is the Holy Spirit that has been sent to guide the Church and all the faithful as they continue to proclaim the message of God’s love and saving works carrying on the mission Christ entrusted to us. But just who or what is the Holy Spirit?

#### **The Holy Spirit:**

- Is God and the third Person of the Blessed Trinity (CCT<sup>2</sup>, I, IX, V):
  - The Spirit is described in personal terms grammatically. The Greek word for Spirit (*pneuma*) is neutral in gender, yet the Bible uses masculine pronouns (“He,” “Him”) to refer to the Spirit (John 16:13-14; 15:26; 16:7-8).
- Is a distinct Person, from the Father and Son but possesses the same Divine nature (CCC 245):
  - The individuality of the Spirit can be seen in the words of St. Paul when he says: “The Holy Spirit spoke to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah” (Acts 28: 25).
- Is the Lord the giver of life who proceeds from the Father (Council of Constantinople 381).
- Is revealed through the prophets (CCC 687, 1 Peter 1:11 & 2 Peter 1:20 – 21).
- Is the Paraclete (counselor: he who is called to one’s side):
  - “But when the Paraclete comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall give testimony of me” (John 15:26).
- Is the Spirit: Promise, Adoption, God, and Glory (CCC 693).
- Is the living water welling up to eternal life in the heart that prays (CCC 2652).
- Is the principle author of Sacred Scripture (CCC 304):
  - “On the one hand, this inspiration was not necessarily audible or even verbal (word for word), but, on the other hand, it was more than ‘inspiration’ in the common sense of the word, more than a vague help or inclination. On the one hand, the Spirit did not reduce his human instruments to puppets but spoke through the different personalities, backgrounds, and styles of his human authors; for ‘grace does not destroy nature but perfects it.’ But, on the other hand, he insured that their writings (Scripture) would have infallibility and divine authority, so that we can be certain of its truth; for ‘God can neither deceive nor be deceived.’ As sinful fallible mankind needed no less; and a wise and merciful God provided no less” (Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity*, p.95).
- Is the Sanctifier (CCC 14) *theosis* (divinization): for the Spirit’s essential work in us is that we may “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).
  - The Baltimore Catechism (no.2) explains: “The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church as the source of its life and sanctifies souls through the gift of grace” (108). We encounter this grace most assuredly in the sacraments but it is present in other ways. We as members of the Church, the body of Christ, have direct access to this grace in a unique way.
- Is the gift of God’s love (CCC 733).

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church – CCC

<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Council of Trent – CCT

### **The Holy Spirit is known (CCC 688):**

- In the Scriptures he inspired:
  - The Spirit guided the Old Testament writers as well as the new; it is also the voice of Christ speaking through the prophets (St. Clement, *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 8.1, 45.2).
- In Tradition as witnessed by the Church Fathers:
  - Tradition is what is handed down from age to age from bishop to bishop and has its roots in the teaching of the apostles. The Holy Spirit guides sacred tradition and enables it to be passed on without error. As St. Paul says: “I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, as I handed them on to you” (1 Cor 11: 2).
- In the Church’s Magisterium, which he assists:
  - The Magisterium is the teaching or governing body of Bishops gathered under the Pope. Their job is to faithfully hand on the teachings of the Church as they have been transmitted through tradition (CCC816).
- In the Liturgy
  - “The mission of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy of the Church is to prepare the assembly to encounter Christ; to recall and manifest Christ to the faithful of the assembly; to make the saving work of Christ present and active by his transforming power; and to make the gift of communion bear fruit in the Church” (CCC 1112).
  - “Christ's work in the liturgy is sacramental: because his mystery of salvation is made present there by the power of his Holy Spirit” (CCC 1111).
- In the sacraments:
  - In the sacraments we receive the necessary grace to follow Christ. “Through the Church’s sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body” (CCC 739).
- In prayer:
  - “The Holy Spirit...is the master of prayer” (CCC 741).

### **The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

- The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful open and ready to receive divine inspiration (CCC 1831).
- The Fruits of the Holy Spirits are: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control and chastity (CCC 1832). The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are the actions of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit put into practice in our lives.

### **In Conclusion**

Through baptism and confirmation we are called to go forth proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us the gifts to successfully carry on the mission of Christ. As Peter Kreeft says: “After the Resurrection and just after his Ascension, Christ told his disciples not to go out and preach his gospel but to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, because only then would they have the power for this world-changing work (see Acts 1:4 – 5, 8). They could not do divine deeds with only human power. (Neither can we.) The Kingdom of God could not be built with tools of men. The Church (visible and invisible) is the Kingdom of God, and God gave her the three power tools...theology, morality, and liturgy; creed, code and cult; word, works, and worship; dogmas, laws, and prayers; and he supplies the Holy Spirit as the energy for all three power tools” (*Catholic Christianity*, p.84). The Holy Spirit lives, acts and works within the Church, within the world, and within each of us; we are called to respond to this Spirit and to go forth to love and serve the Lord.