

" I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT "

Jerry Johnson

Who is this Holy Spirit in whom we say we believe? The third person of the Trinity, completely united to the Father and Son and yet a distinct person. What can we know about Him and the role He plays in the life of a Christian? The term "Spirit" is translated from the Hebrew word "ruah", meaning breath, air or wind. As with the wind, we can't visibly see the Spirit, but we can see the effect His presence has on us and those around us. We can feel and sense the power of the Spirit in our lives as God touches us in many and varied ways. The catechism tells us that "The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature". (CCC 703) All creation exists through Jesus, the Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God's very breath. In addition to giving us our physical life, it is the Holy Spirit who brings us into communion with the Trinity and breathes God's life into us. In the words of the catechism; "He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us...The Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son". (CCC 683) This life of the Spirit, the "likeness" of God that man received when he was first created in God's image, was lost with the fall of Adam and Eve. Paragraph 706 of the CCC continues to

tell us that when the Son (Jesus) assumed that "image", he restored it in the Father's "likeness" by giving it again its Glory, the Spirit who is "the giver of life". This restoration, which takes place in each of us at our baptism, once again brings us into that intimate relationship with the Trinity. It is the Holy Spirit who must first touch us and bring us to Jesus who, in turn, brings us to the Father. The work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives can best be described by looking at the titles and symbols of the Spirit. When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to his apostles, he referred to him as the "*Paraclete*" which has also been translated "*consoler*" or "*advocate*". It is the work of the Spirit to console us and to be at our side as an advocate and revealer of the truth as Jesus proclaimed in John 16:13. He will lead us and guide us to "the Truth" who is Jesus himself. St. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit also prays from within us when we are at a loss for words (Rom 8:26). *Water* is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, signifying a new birth through water which also cleanses and wells up within us (John 4:14). Another symbol for the Holy Spirit is the *anointing* with oil. In ancient times, as well as today, oil is used for healing and for the strengthening of our muscles. The work of the Holy Spirit is definitely one of healing and strengthening. *Fire* signifies the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit. He transforms everything He touches. John the

Baptist proclaimed Christ as the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16) and it was as tongues of fire that the Spirit was manifested to the apostles at Pentecost. *Cloud and light* are images used throughout Scripture in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. God reveals Himself in the midst of the cloud which also veils his glory. The light leads us through the darkness of life and reveals Christ to us. The *seal* of the Holy Spirit expresses the indelible character imprinted in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. It can never be removed but we still have the freedom to reject this seal by our sinfulness. The *hand*, or laying on of hands is a physical sign signifying healing and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The *finger* of God, which is his Spirit, casts out demons and writes his law on our hearts. Finally, the Holy Spirit is manifested as a *dove* at the baptism of Christ as it comes down upon him and remains with him. We pray that the Spirit does the same to us and as that happens we are led into communion with God and one another. Again, in the words of the catechism, "The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit..." (CCC 737)

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St. Basil gives us a wonderful summary of the work of the Holy Spirit in these final words: "Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God 'Father' and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory." We pray that God will pour out his Spirit to accomplish this wonderful and amazing work in each one of us! Come, Holy Spirit, come!

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SACRED SCRIPTURE



"...no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit."

(1 Cor 12:3)

"...God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6)

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (John 16:13)

" In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.

Rom 8:26)

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you

forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you." (John 14:15-17)

"These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, 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 14:25)

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit."

(1 Cor:12-13)

"If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him."

(Luke 11:13)

THE SAINTS SPEAK

Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through his Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God's Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father, and the Father confers incorruptibility on them. And it is impossible to see God's Son without the Spirit, and no one can approach the Father without the Son, for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, and the knowledge of God's Son is obtained through the Holy Spirit." (St. Irenaeus)

"All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God. For if Christ, together with the Father's and his own Spirit, comes to dwell in each of us, though we are many, still the Spirit is one and undivided. He binds together the spirits of each and every one of us, . . . and makes all appear as one in him. For just as the power of Christ's sacred flesh unites those in whom it dwells into one body, I think that in the same way the one and undivided Spirit of God, who dwells in all, leads all into spiritual unity."

(St. Cyril of Alexandria)

THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS

- Do I sense the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit working in my own life?
- Do I pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on myself and others?