

God: The Holy Spirit and The Church: The Reflecting Light of Christ

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How do we have a relationship with a spirit, we can understand a father, a son, but a spirit?

1845 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon Christians are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit: joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, charity, goodness, modesty, chastity.

How great is our inheritance when our hearts embrace the entreaties of the Holy Spirit? It's the forthcoming and imperishable treasure of eternal communion with God, in an inherited kingdom, paid for in advance by Jesus Christ. And the gifts we receive when actually living in the Holy Spirit are ours now. The gifts of: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the LORD. The life of one who daily lives in the Spirit is marked by wisdom and knowledge, which power the engine of instinctive and compassionate application of truth. These gifts amplify understanding, and through piety reveal the blessing gained by a reverent fear of the LORD, through which we are transformed. A close relationship with the Holy Spirit brings with it His special counsel. And through that counsel the fortitude to press on in His work, despite jealousy, rivalry, hatreds, dissensions or factions.

To further illustrate I'll make an analogy to building renovation (because that's what I've been doing on my house.)

Through a renovation project of our soul, the fruits of the Holy Spirit become the building blocks of our Christian character. These construction materials: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity, refurbish who we are. So much so that sometimes, those who knew us previously can hardly recognize who we have become. Charity, kindness, generosity, and goodness form the foundation of virtue upon which our Christian character is built. The overarching building block of peace is best described by Paul when uses the phrase, in his letter to the Philippians, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding." Keeping out the harsh weather of doubt is the roof of faithfulness. This Christian character is surrounded with the strong supporting walls, of patience, and gentleness. And within those walls we exercise modesty, chastity, and self-control.

CCC CHAPTER THREE: I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT 683 “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.”¹ “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”² This knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit: *to be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit.*

He comes to meet us and kindles faith in us. By virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith, 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.

Some images of the Holy Spirit:

I grew up around the waters of the Great Lakes in Michigan. For me, one of the most powerfully illustrative images of the Holy Spirit, in Scripture and Church Tradition, comes from St. John of Damascus. It is the image of the Holy Spirit as an ocean, fed by the river of Christ, originating from the spring of life...the Father. The ocean is water, the river is water, and the spring is water, the substance of the three is one. I like the image conceived by St. Augustine that "The Holy Spirit is the soul of the church." I think it wonderfully illuminates the image of the Holy Spirit from another perspective. Another image is the amazing miracle of the Holy Spirit in enabling the Apostles to speak in foreign languages at Pentecost, for me that is a potent apologetic. It brings comfort and understanding to a world that suffers from a soul-sickening pessimism.

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit by: Tim Staples

The third person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is sometimes referred to as "the forgotten" member of the Godhead. He is, no doubt, the least spoken of among the three persons of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Most students of our Catholic theology of the Trinity agree: Pneumatology, or the study of the Holy Spirit, is probably the least developed, after the study of the Son and the Father. It is, therefore, no surprise to find many Catholics ill-equipped to deal with some of the more notable errors concerning he who is "the Lord and giver of life." Thus, studying the person and nature of the Holy Spirit, though sometimes neglected, is crucial for us as Catholic apologists and as Catholics in general.

The most common attacks on Catholic belief concerning the Holy Spirit generally come from quasi-Christian sects such as Oneness Pentecostals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science ,and Mormons who deny the central mystery of the Christian faith—the Trinity. Both the personhood as well as the divinity of the Holy Spirit is rejected by these groups. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a "force," or as "power" emanating from God, rather than as God himself. As Catholics, then, we must be able to respond to these two key misunderstandings concerning the Holy Spirit. The truths about the Holy Spirit are that 1. He is a person, and 2. He is God.

More than a Force

One of the first reasons given for denying the divine nature of the Holy Spirit is often to point out that the Greek word for "spirit" (pneuma) is neuter. Catholics agree that spirit in Greek is a neuter term. But this does not necessarily mean the Holy Spirit is impersonal. Nouns in Greek are assigned gender as they are in many languages. Further, if being referred to as "spirit" indicates the third person of the Blessed Trinity is impersonal, then both angels and God the Father would have to be "forces" rather than persons as well. In John 4:24, Jesus says "God is spirit (Greek pneuma) and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

CCC ARTICLE 8 "THE HOLY SPIRIT" 687 "No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."⁷ Now God's Spirit, who reveals God, makes known to us Christ, his Word, his living Utterance, but the Spirit does not speak of himself. *The Spirit who "has spoken through the prophets" makes us hear the Father's Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself.* We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. The Spirit of truth who "unveils" Christ to us "will not speak on his own."⁸ Such properly divine self-effacement explains why "the world cannot receive [him], because it neither sees him nor knows him," while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them.

693 Besides the proper name of "Holy Spirit," which is most frequently used in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, we also find in St. Paul the titles: the Spirit of the promise, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of God and, in St. Peter, the Spirit of glory.

Our church has always used symbology a great deal, so it's worth it to look for it, and understand it when you see it.

Here are some Symbols that are used for the Holy Spirit

694 **Water.** The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit.

695 **Anointing.** The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit, to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation.

696 **Fire.** While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. The prayer of the prophet Elijah, who "arose like fire" and whose "word burned like a torch," brought down fire from heaven on the sacrifice on Mount Carmel.

697 **Cloud and light.** These two images occur together in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory—with Moses on Mount Sinai, 43 at the tent of meeting, 44 and during the wandering in the desert. In the Holy Spirit, Christ fulfills these figures. On the mountain of Transfiguration, the Spirit in the “cloud came and overshadowed” Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John, and “a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

698 **The seal** is a symbol close to that of anointing. “The Father has set his seal” on Christ and also seals us in him. By this anointing the confirmand receives the “mark,” the seal of the Holy Spirit. [Almost *like a spiritual tattoo.*] A seal is a symbol of a person, a sign of personal authority, or ownership of an object.

699 **The hand.** Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them.⁵¹ In his name the apostles will do the same.⁵² Even more pointedly; it is by the Apostles’ imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given.

700 **The finger.** “It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons.”⁵⁵ If God’s law was written on tablets of stone “by the finger of God,” then the “letter from Christ” entrusted to the care of the apostles, is written “with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.”

701 **The dove.** At the end of the flood, **whose symbolism refers to Baptism**, a dove released by Noah returns with a fresh olive tree branch in its beak as a sign that the earth was again habitable.⁵⁸ When Christ comes up from the water of his baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon him and remains with him.⁵⁹ The Holy Spirit comes down and remains in the purified hearts of the baptized.

The Advocate.

John 14: 15“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

Jn 15: 26“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

by Rev. William G. Most

To review they are: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord.

They each perfect certain basic virtues. Four of them perfect the intellectual virtues.

[It's worth it to note that ours is not a blind faith, but a faith illuminated through intellectual virtues.]

Understanding gives an intuitive penetration into truth. Wisdom perfects charity, in order to judge divine things. Knowledge perfects the virtue of hope. The gift of counsel perfects prudence.

[By the way, we do have to judge, not people, but actions.]

The other three gifts perfect virtues of the will and appetites. The gift of piety perfects justice in giving to others that which is their due. This is especially true of giving God what is His due. Fortitude perfects the virtue of determination, in facing dangers. Fear of the Lord perfects temperance in controlling disordered appetites.

To illustrate the difference between things done with the Gifts and those done with the ordinary virtues, we'll talk about the gift of counsel.

There are commonly three kinds of guides a person will follow in making decisions:

1) **The whim of the moment.** Aristotle in his Ethics 1. 5 says that to act that way is a life fit for cattle, who do just what they happen to feel like doing.

2) **Reason**, which in practice is always aided by actual graces, which God gives so generously. For example suppose I see three options open to me, all of which are moral. Ideally I would make at least mentally a list of the good points and of the bad points of each. Then I would look over the whole board, and pick what gives the best effect for me. Or [another example] if I come to think I need penance for my sins, I would ask: How much have I sinned, so I can know how much penance? What kind of penance will fit with my health? with the obligations of my state in life? And after several steps, a decision is reached. This method is called discursive, since it moves from one step to another.

3) In the third and highest way a soul, does not go from one step to another in a discursive process, but the **answer is, as it were, dropped fully made and complete into his mind by the Gifts**. This was the case of Our Lady, for example at the annunciation. If she had been operating in the ordinary mode, she might well have reasoned: Now my people have been waiting for centuries for the Messiah (as soon as Gabriel said He would reign over the house of

Jacob forever, even any ordinary Jew would have known that He was the messiah). Now he is here. I should share this news with others, especially the authorities in Jerusalem. And what about my husband Joseph? In a short time he will not be able to avoid dark thoughts. But the Gospel shows she did none of these things. God needed to send a special angel to tell Joseph. so the Gifts can lead souls to points not contrary to reason, but far more lofty than what reason would suggest.

Cf. the following from St. John of the Cross: (Ascent 3.2.10; cf. Living Flame 1.4; 1.9 and 2.34): "God alone moves the powers of these souls . . . to those deeds which are suitable, according to the will and plan of God, and they cannot be moved to others. . . . Such were the actions of the most glorious Virgin, our Lady, who, being elevated from the beginning [of her life] to this lofty state, had never the form of any creature impressed on her, nor was moved by such, but was always moved by the Holy Spirit."

But there is a danger: a soul could mistake its own desires for action of the Gifts, since the reasons are not clear to it. Two points must be kept in mind: 1) The full and apparent action of these gifts does not appear until one is well advanced in the spiritual life (hidden assistance by them can come earlier). 2) Ordinarily an inspiration via the Gifts leaves the soul not fully certain--a signal to consult a director or superior. Uncommonly they will give certitude, but only when a decision must be made on the spot, and there is no time to consult.

When a soul acts with usual actual graces God is the most important actor, yet the faculties of the human do churn out the result--hence it is easy to suppose the work is done basically by that soul. But under the action of the Gifts, the soul is more passive, and its own faculties contribute even less.

The Charismatic Gifts

by Rev. William G. Most

The ordinary charismatic gifts, the invisible gifts that help us fulfill our state in life, are widely given. The extraordinary are given when and to whom the Spirit wills, as St. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 12.11. They are not routine today, though they were in the first generation Church, as we see from 1 Cor 12-14.

Some have claimed that these extraordinary graces are ordinary and were ordinary for the first centuries. But the Patristic texts cited for this view are few. Fairly clear are those of Tertullian (an early pentecostalist who eventually left the Church), St. Hilary, and St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Already by the fourth century, however, St. Augustine had to argue that the accounts of miracles in the early Church were not mere fables. In the East, St. John Chrysostom also noted that the age of the charismatic gifts as a regular occurrence had long since ended. It is clear from the history of the early Church that as soon as Christians could point to the rapid spread of the Faith and the witness of martyrs in order to make converts, God began to give the

charismatic gifts less frequently—they were always by their nature extraordinary, and long before the time of Augustine and Chrysostom, they were no longer necessary on a large scale.

Thus, it is not true that extraordinary charismatic gifts are simply actualizations--putting to work--of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that all Catholics have. Remember, the special charismatic things belong to one category, the seven Gifts to another. One cannot suppose graces from one side of this divide will actualize those from the other side.

Still further, the possession of extraordinary charismatic favors does not even prove those who have them are in the state of grace. We think of the frightening words of Our Lord Himself in Mt 7. 22-23: "Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out devils, and have done many marvels in your name? And then I will admit to them: I never knew you: depart from me you workers of iniquity."

Vatican II, Lumen gentium 12 said of the extraordinary gifts: ". . . they are not to be rashly sought, nor should one presumptuously expect of them the fruits of the apostolic works; but the judgment as to whether or not they are genuine, and as to their ordered use pertains to those who are in charge in the Church" When these gifts are used with careful discernment of spirits and obedience, they are "fitting and useful for the needs of the Church" (Ibid.)

THE CHURCH: REFLECTING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

IMAGES AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH —CCC, NOS. 748-810 PETER IS A ROCK AND A LOVING PASTOR The account in Chapter 16 of Matthew begins with Jesus and the Apostles' arrival at Caesarea Philippi, a city that was twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. In this setting, Jesus asks the Apostles who people thought he was. They replied that some thought Jesus was John the Baptist, others that he was Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. They wondered if Jesus was one of the great prophets come back from the dead. Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter alone replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus praised Peter's reply, noting that he had not arrived at such an insight through his own human abilities.

What is a Church? I'm reminded of a story about Blessed Pope John Paul II's utter determination to worship God, and do so in spite of the violence that surrounded him. This story was told to me by a Polish friend when I lived in the Chicago area. In the 1950's the communists built the town of Nowa Huta as a "communist workers' paradise." Of course they expected everyone to be atheist, but the devout Catholic Poles would not let that stand. For twenty years the devout Catholics fought to build a church, but were denied building permits, and were prevented from building it by every bureaucratic trick in the book. In spite of threats of violence they would put up a cross and hold a mass out in a field, but by the next morning their cross would be bulldozed down, and all evidence of a worship service destroyed. The

stalwart Bishop Karol Wojtyła (later Pope John Paul II) would hold mass in the freezing rain, dust, snow, hot sun, and never gave up on this church. It was eventually built, and the gigantic crucifix over the altar was constructed from shrapnel taken from the wounds of Polish soldiers, collected and sent from all over the country. Clearly, you don't need a building to have a vibrant, energetic church. So that's what a church, a church is more than a building.

REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit revealed the Church at Pentecost, coming upon the Apostles and the disciples with a transforming fire, forming them into a visible community, and empowering them to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The early Church Fathers taught that there was an inseparable link between the Holy Spirit and the Church: "Where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church" (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 24.1). So forceful is the presence of the Spirit in the life of the early Church that the New Testament narrative of the Church's early growth, the Acts of the Apostles, is often called the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit." The Acts of the Apostles and early Church history show how the Holy Spirit bestowed gifts on the community of believers for their roles and responsibilities in serving the Church. This was a dynamic process that illustrated the abiding presence and action of the Spirit along with the increased understanding of the Faith. From Pentecost onward, the Church began her earthly pilgrimage that will be fulfilled one day in glory.

The Holy Spirit maintains the stability, durability, and continuity of the Church both in favorable and unfavorable historical circumstances.

Peter had received a revelation from God and had spoken from his faith. "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father" (v. 17). Jesus then proceeded to make Peter the rock on which he would build the Church. Beneath the backdrop of a temple built on a rock and devoted to the idolatrous worship of an emperor, Peter, whose name means "rock," is chosen to lead God's Church. "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (v. 18). Jesus went further and promised to give Peter the "keys to the Kingdom of Heaven," that is, authority to shepherd the Church. Jesus also promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. These words are a reminder that, while disorder and chaos might threaten the Church, they will never prevail over the Church because of Christ's protection. This scene ends with Christ's prediction of his suffering and death. John 21:15-17 recounts a Resurrection scene. The risen Jesus spoke to a repentant Peter, who is filled with sorrow because three times he denied Christ, and Christ asks him "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" Peter replied, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." Jesus repeated the question two more times, and Peter strongly professed his love. Each time Jesus commissioned him to feed his lambs and sheep, that is, the members of the Church. This scene complements the one in Matthew. There, Jesus called Peter to be the rock of the Church. Here, Christ summoned Peter to be a shepherd who loves Jesus and the Church's people. Peter was one of the Twelve Apostles, all chosen by Jesus to be the foundation of his Church. At the head of the Twelve, Jesus placed Peter. From Jesus, the Twelve received the mandate to preach the Gospel to all nations. Peter ultimately made his way to Rome, where he died as a martyr. In establishing the

Twelve Apostles with Peter at their head, Jesus gave the Church the basic structure of its leadership. **THE CHURCH AS MYSTERY** The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation. —CCC, no. 771, citing Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium; SC), no. 2 The Church is a holy mystery because of her origin in the Holy Trinity and her mission to be the Sacrament of Salvation (the sign and instrument of God’s plan to unite all under Christ). The Holy Trinity brought the Church into being. The Father called the Church into existence. The Son established the Church. The Holy Spirit filled the Church with power and wisdom at Pentecost. The Holy Trinity abides with the Church always, creatively and providentially. The Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, brings Christ’s salvation to the world. She is the instrument of God’s universal call to holiness. At the same time, the Church is made up of a sinful people. Yet despite the personal sinfulness of her members, the Church remains holy by the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit who permeates her.

MEANINGS OF THE WORD CHURCH

The word Church is a translation of biblical words: the Hebrew word qahal, and the Greek word ekklesia, both of which mean “gathering of people or community” for worship. It was first applied to the people of Israel whom God called into existence. The Church is also called into existence by God. Responding to the proclamation of the Gospel begun by the Apostles, men and women embrace God’s gift of faith and through Baptism become members of the community of the Church. The word Church means the people gathered by God into one community, guided today by the bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles and whose head is the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. The term Church also applies to specific geographical communities called dioceses. It also applies to the buildings where the faithful gather for the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and to families, who are called domestic churches.

PLANNED BY THE FATHER

How did the Church come to be? From the beginning, the Church was part of God’s plan for sharing his divine life with all people. There was a gradual formation of God’s family through a series of events described in the Old Testament: God’s covenant with Abraham as the father of a great people, the liberation of ancient Israel from slavery in Egypt and their establishment in the Promised Land, and their solidification as a nation through the kingship of David.

FOUNDED BY JESUS CHRIST

Jesus brought about the fulfillment of the Father’s plan for the Church first by his preaching and witnessing the Good News of the Kingdom, with its gifts of salvation from sin and participation in divine life. The seed and beginning of the Kingdom was the little flock whom Jesus shepherded as his family. Jesus established the beginnings of a visible structure of the Church that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved, through his choice of the Twelve Apostles, with Peter as the head. By his Cross, Jesus gave birth to the Church: The Church is born primarily of Christ’s total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross. “The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus.” “For it was from

the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the ‘wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.’” As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross. (CCC, no. 766, citing LG, no. 3, and SC, no. 5)