

Catholics and the Holy Spirit



Opening Prayer

Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray. O God, Who didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us in the same Spirit to be truly wise, and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit is also known as the Holy Ghost. St. Augustine in his work *De Trinitas* (I, iii, 5) says: "*In no other subject is the danger of erring so great, or the progress so difficult, or the fruit of a careful study so appreciable*".

The Holy Spirit is distinct as a Person within the Blessed Trinity. However, he is consubstantial with God the Father and God the Son. Being God he possesses with the God the Father and God the Son one and the same Divine Essence / Nature.

The Nicene Creed

I Believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life...

The Holy Spirit is also called "Lord". The Holy Spirit sustains our lives as Christians, illuminating us after the new birth. The original Creed of Nicaea (325 AD) simply ended with "We believe in the Holy Spirit." The other additions were approved at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381. However, most scholars believe that the text of the full Creed dates prior to this Council, and that the Bishops simply gave their approval to a Creed already in use.

Who Proceeds from the Father and the Son...

The Son is said to be "begotten", while the Holy Spirit is said to "proceed". Both words are used to say that the Son and Holy Spirit are in special relationships to the Father, yet are also fully divine and co-eternal. The phrase "and the Son", in Latin, *filioque*, was not in the original Creed, but is used in many Western Churches. The addition developed over time, probably as a tool against Arians in the Gothic lands.

The addition of the *filioque* clause to the Creed was not recognised by the Christian Church in the East. It was first added to the Nicene Creed at the Synod of Toledo in Spain in 447 AD. This clause remains a major division between Eastern and Western Christianity, mainly because the *filioque* was added to the Western version of the Nicene Creed without Eastern input.

Hopefully this controversy will be resolved in the near future. Strenuous efforts are currently being made at reconciliation between the East and Western Christian Churches.

Who with the Father and the Son, is Adored and Glorified...

The Holy Spirit is God as are the Father and the Son, and as such is worthy of the worship due to the Father and Son. These additions at Constantinople in AD 381 were directed at various heresies, particularly those who denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. The names given to these heretics were Macedonians (named after a heretical bishop) or pneumatomachi ("fighters against the Spirit").

Who Has Spoken Through the Prophets...

The Spirit inspired the prophets of old, and inspires the Church today. Through the Spirit the Prophets foretold the Jewish People about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Revelation of the Holy Spirit

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

⁶⁶ *...Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.*

The Holy Spirit is present from the opening lines of the Bible:

Genesis 1:2

² *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*

In the **Old Testament** the Holy Spirit descends to allow individuals to undertake specific tasks:

When Moses grew tired of leading the people of Israel, God told him to gather together 70 elders of the people. God said that He would take some of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that was upon Moses and place it upon the 70 elders **Numbers 11:17**. When the Holy Spirit came upon the elders, they prophesied. Even two men in the camp that did not come out to the meeting tent began to prophesy. When the people came to Moses, they complained that these two men were prophesying in the camp. But Moses replied, *"Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"* **Numbers 11:29**

Moses looked forward to the time when all of the people of God could receive this anointing of the Holy Spirit. Later, the Prophet Joel prophesied that it would happen:

Joel 2:28-29 – The Day of the Lord

²⁸ *"And afterward,*

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.*

²⁹ *Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

1 Samuel 10:6 – referring to King David

⁶ *The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.*

1 Samuel 16:13

¹³ *So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power.*

Ezekiel 11:5

⁵ *Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: "This is what the LORD says: That is what you are saying, O house of Israel, but I know what is going through your mind.*

At the start of the **New Testament** the Holy Spirit is everywhere:

- The Spirit overshadows Mary so she conceives a child (**Luke 1:35**).
- John the Baptist (**Luke 1:15**), his mother (**Luke 1:41**) and father (**Luke 1:67**) were all filled with the Holy Spirit and both parents prophesied as a result.
- The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon in the temple (**Luke 2:25**).
- When John began his ministry, he did so speaking of the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit (**Luke 3:16**), and testifying of the one on whom the Spirit descended (**John 1:32f**).
- And of course there is the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and lighting upon Jesus at his Baptism (**Matt. 3:16**).

The work of the Holy Spirit can be clearly seen in the life of Jesus:

- When Jesus began his ministry, He did so full of the Spirit (**Luke 4:1, 4:14. 10:21**), given 'without limit' (**John 3:34**).
- Jesus cites Isaiah's prophecy that 'the Spirit of the Lord is on me' (**Luke 4:18**).
- He explained that all must be born of the Spirit (**John 3:5-8**), who gives life (**John 6:63**).
- He claimed to drive out demons by the Spirit of God (**Matt. 12:28**).

In **John 14:23-31** Jesus Promises the Coming of the Holy Spirit:

²³Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵"All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. ³⁰I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, ³¹but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

"Come now; let us leave.

The coming of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) is beautifully described by St Luke in **The Acts of the Apostles 2:1-4**:

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter repeated the prophecy of Joel above when addressing the crowds after the Holy Spirit had descended on them.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

The Seven Sacraments

The Holy Spirit is intimately involved in all of the seven sacraments:

- Baptism (a) - forgiveness / cleansing original sin (and for adults, any past sins)
- Confirmation (a) - strength
- Eucharist
- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Anointing of the Sick (a)
- Holy Orders (a)
- Matrimony

(a) = anointing takes place using Holy Chrism

Confirmation:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1302-1303 teaches:

It is evident from its celebration that the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

Eucharist:

During the Eucharist, after the Sanctus, comes the **Epiclesis**. The **Epiclesis** is an invocation / calling upon the Holy Spirit. In Eucharistic Prayer II the words used are:

Lord, you are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness. Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Manifestations of the Holy Spirit

The term "Spirit" translates the Hebrew word רוח (*ruah*) and the Greek word πνευμα (*pneuma*), which, in its primary sense, means breath, air, wind.

The Catechism lists the various symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Bible:

Water - Signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism. As "by one Spirit we were all baptized," so we are also "made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13). Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified (John 19:34; 1 John 5:8) as its source and welling up in us to eternal life (Cf. John 4:10-14; John 7:38; Exodus 17:1-6; Isaiah 55:1; Zechariah 14:8; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Revelation 21:6; 22:17).

Anointing - The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit, to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. (Cf. 1 John 2:20,27; 2 Corinthians 1:21). In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation, called "chrismation" in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus. **Christ** is the English form of the Greek word Χριστός (*Christós*), which means literally *The Anointed One*. The word was originally used to translate the Hebrew word משיח (*Mašíah*), that is Messiah.

The Seal is a symbol close to that of anointing - "The Father has set his seal" on Christ and also seals us in him. (John 6:27; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:3). Because this seal indicates the indelible effect of the anointing with the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the image of the seal (*sphragis*) has been used in some theological traditions to express the indelible "character" imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments.

Fire - Symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. In the form of tongues "as of fire," the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself.

Cloud and Light - The Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "overshadows" her, so that she might conceive and give birth to Jesus. On the mountain of Transfiguration, the Spirit in the "cloud came and overshadowed" Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter, James and John, and "a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Luke 9:34-35)

The Hand - It is by the Apostles' imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given. The Letter to the Hebrews lists the imposition of hands among the "fundamental elements" of its teaching. The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental epiclesis. There is also a laying on of hands at Confirmation and during Holy Orders.

The Finger - "It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons." 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." (**Exodus 31:18; 2 Corinthians 3:3**)

The Dove - 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. (**Matthew 3:16**)

The Gospels and the Holy Spirit

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

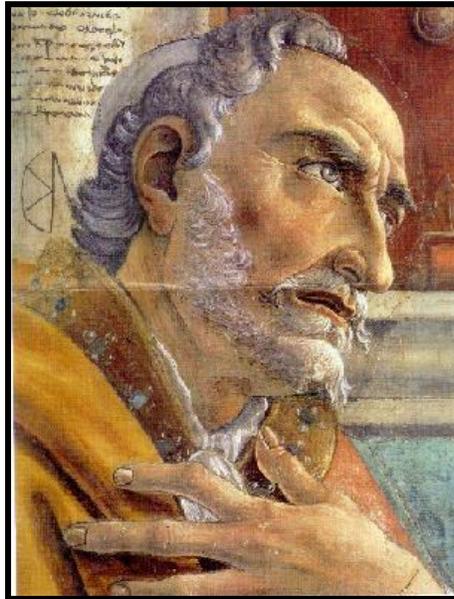
¹⁰⁵ God is the author of Sacred Scripture. "The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

"For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself."

Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- Wisdom
- Understanding
- Counsel
- Fortitude
- Knowledge
- Piety
- Fear of the Lord.

Concluding Prayer



PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
by Saint Augustine of Hippo

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

Amen.