

# THE HOLY SPIRIT: Man's Helper and Friend



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Gratitude:

We give thanks to God for his merciful love. By his grace, we are able to once again reflect on a major aspect of our faith as Catholic Christians, - namely, The Holy Spirit. To God be all glory and never-ending praise forever. Again, we are ever grateful to you my dear family of God in the Archdiocese of Onitsha and all men and women of goodwill for the joyful reception which my past Pastoral Letters have enjoyed among you. May the contents of these letters continue to draw us closer to God and aid our journey through time to our true home in God's kingdom.

### 2. NOTION AND IDENTITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Person or identity of the Holy Spirit remains an enigma, thereby difficult to understand. In the Bible, many symbols and images are used to describe the Holy Spirit. These images include: wind, fire, cloud, water, oil, breath and light. Such may explain why some think of the Holy Spirit as a powerful influence available for our use at various times, or a power we plug into when we are in need or more still, a power we invoke against our enemies. For example, "Holy Ghost... !..Fire!" has become a popular slogan inviting the Holy Spirit to destroy one's enemies. But the Holy Spirit is not a mere power or influence. It is not a negative force nor a weapon against our enemies.

In fact, the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, the third person of the Most Blessed Trinity. He is worthy of our filial trust. He deserves to receive our love, adoration and worship just like Jesus and God the Father. He is the Paraclete (that is a helper) and the advocate (that is one who pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or a judicial court), the one promised by Jesus whom the Father will send to us. Hence, He says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another 'advocate' to help you and be with you forever..." (John 14: 16-17).

3. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is a person whom we can trust. He is a friend, a helper, a defender. He may not be clear in our mental picture/mental concept like God the Son whom we know through the incarnation or God the Father whom we know through the concept of human Fatherhood. Nevertheless, when we begin to see the Holy Spirit as a person in his own right who wants to be in relationship with us the process of transforming our lives can begin. (cf. Charles Whitehead, *An Invitation to the Spirit*, p. 21).

4. In the Nicene Creed we pray, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets”. All these show that the Holy Spirit has an identity, he is a person like the Father and the Son. Like them He is worshipped and glorified. But God the Holy Spirit does not seem so much like a person to us. When the New Testament depicts him as a dove that descended from heaven during Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:16) or as tongues of fire resting on the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1- 4), these images make it more difficult for us to understand and relate with the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person, the way we relate with the Father and the Son.

Before we can have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, we need first of all to know the Holy Spirit. A frequent source of error about the work of the Holy Spirit is the attempt to study and understand his work without first of all knowing him as a person. It is important from the standpoint of worship that we decide whether the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, worthy to receive our adoration, our faith, our love and our filial surrender or whether it is simply an influence emanating from God or a power or an illumination that God imparts upon us. If the Holy Spirit is a Divine Being and we do not know him as such, then we are robbing a Divine being of the worship due to him.

Given that many have only theoretical knowledge without personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, the aim of this pastoral letter is to offer reflections that will foster deeper understanding and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.

## **5. MOTIVATION AND CHOICE OF TOPIC:**

The office of a Bishop places a great responsibility on the recipients, which is at once ennobling, demanding, edifying, also involving sacrifices and consolations. Reflecting on the mystery of this sacrament and the eternal realities associated with the office, I come to the inescapable and irrevocable conclusion that it is the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit truly at work. The more I think about this ministry, the clearer the ever-present assistance of the Holy Spirit looms large, both in the background and in the foreground.

6. Therefore, in this 20<sup>th</sup> year of our Episcopacy, as we carry on the ministry of teaching, leading and sanctifying the people of God entrusted to our pastoral care, we have found it necessary to reflect on the Holy Spirit. Given that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization and the power for ministry, we humbly recognize his role as we appreciate the fact that our ministry has been unfolding in His power as the Uncreated Grace. It is a recognition that our ministry

continues to unfold in the power of grace. The emphasis on the primacy of grace in our ministry inspires and motivates us to remind our faithful that Christian life becomes a mirage outside the power of the Holy Spirit. In truth, there is practically no authentic Christianity outside the grace of God.

The Choice of the topic stems more from the realization that the entire Christian life is driven by the Holy Spirit added to the recognition of man's absolute dependance on the power of God's grace.

It is my burning desire to reflect on this topic, to eliminate some mistaken notions of the Spirit, clarify his indisputable role in salvation history so that the faithful can develop a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, who, as a person, is "Man's Helper and Friend".

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NAME AND PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

7. The Scripture is sufficiently clear with the revelation that the Holy Spirit is a person with an individuality of his own. In our search for an adequate understanding of the identity and person of the Holy Spirit, it is good to start with his name.

In many cultures, among the ancients not excluding the biblical world, a name reveals something about the person who bears it. When parents choose a name for their new born child, they are usually trying to communicate something. The names people choose during confirmation or religious professions are similarly revealing. It is human nature to invest names with symbolic meaning. Think of when a man is elected the Pope of the universal Church, he often chooses a name that will set an agenda for his Papacy. People generally choose names because they want to identify themselves with the virtues or strengths associated with a certain saint or mentor who had that name.

8. However, the above is not the case with the name “Holy Spirit”. The name presents us with special challenge because it suggests no human analogy, as Father and Son do. This makes the name more revealing. The name Holy Spirit teaches us that God is more unlike us than like us, and that human analogies (like Father or Son), cannot fully explain the nature of God. God is a mystery. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that “Holy Spirit” is the proper name of the third person of the Blessed Trinity. Scripture informs us of other “titles” and images of the Spirit, but “Holy Spirit” is the name by which God has revealed and disclosed the third person of the Trinity. However, the words “Holy” and “Spirit” do not seem to distinguish the third person from the other two persons of the Trinity. This is because, both the Father and the Son are also “Holy” and “Spirit”. The terms “Holy” and “Spirit” are attributes that all three persons of the Trinity hold in common. St. Augustine however offers this lucid explanation: “Because the third person of the Trinity is the one who is common between both, his own name is what they have in common” (cf. St. Augustine, on the Trinity, 15.37). Pope Benedict XVI, further offers a clearer explanation when he says, unlike “Father” and “Son”, the name of the third Divine Person is not the expression of something specific. It designates that which is common in the Godhead. But it reveals the proper character of the third person: He is that which is common, the unity of the Father and the Son, the unity in person. The Father and the Son are one with each other by going out beyond themselves; it is in the third person, in the fruitfulness of their act of giving that they are one”. (cf. Benedict XVI, “The Holy Spirit as Communion” in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*:

*The Church as Communion*, 46 – 50). According to Cardinal Cantalamessa, the Holy Spirit is the spiritual space, the life sustaining ambiance in which we are able to be in touch with God and with Christ. (cf. Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, p.8).

**9.** To the question, who is the Holy Spirit? We can respond in very simple terms that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the subject to whom the divine worship is addressed together with the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of Creation as well as the Spirit of Redemption, the Spirit of Mission and the Spirit of Sanctification. He is the Spirit that brought order (cosmos) out of the primeval chaos. He is the same Spirit at work at the birth of Christ as well as at the birth of the Church on Pentecost day. This Spirit generates spiritual life in us and becomes the substance of Godly life in us. He is the protological Spirit of the beginning and the eschatological Spirit of the End. The Spirit brings about the life of God in us and continues to care for it, intensifying such life until he leads us back to God in Christ. The Holy Spirit is a mystery.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**10.** The Holy Spirit is one person of the Triune God, besides God the Father and God the Son. He is not just an impersonal force but a fully Divine Person. In the Bible, all the distinctive characteristics of a personality are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

When we say that the Holy Spirit is a person, there are those who understand it to mean that the Holy Spirit has hands, feet, eyes, ears, mouth and so on, but these are not the characteristics of a personality but of corporeity. He is not a human being but a person.

We cannot fully appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit nor relate well with him without first of all recognizing the fact of his personality. Note that, a person is one, who possesses life, thought, volition, action, individuality, character and influence. These characteristics pertain to God the Father. He lives, He thinks, He wills and He acts. He has a separate individuality. He has a particular character and He possesses influence. These characteristics also pertain to God the Son. And, the same characteristics pertain to God the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is a divine person, he has all the attributes of God. There is nothing that God has which the Holy Spirit does not have. Some characteristics of God which the Holy Spirit has include: Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omnipotence.

**11. Omnipresence:** The Holy Spirit is everywhere at the same time. This explains why the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 139:7 “where can I go from your Spirit or where can I flee from your presence?” Nothing and nowhere hides from the Holy Spirit because He is everywhere at the same time.

**12. Omniscience:** From the Scripture, we are told that the Holy Spirit is all-knowing. Not only that He knows us more than we know ourselves but He knows even the deep things of God which He reveals to those who believes in Him. (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11). He has perfect knowledge of everything.

**13. Omnipotence:** The omnipotence of the Holy Spirit can be seen in his involvement in the creation of the entire universe. The Holy Spirit was active with the Father and the Word during the creation of the Universe (cf. Genesis 1:2). The Holy Spirit was also active at the incarnation (Luke 1:35) and in the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3: 18).

**14. Divine Personality:** The doctrine of Divine Personality of the Holy Spirit is of the highest importance especially to those of us who are Christians. This is

particularly in the areas of our spirituality like worship, praise and personal experience.

**15. Worship:** If the Holy Spirit is a divine person, and He is, then we need to worship him. We do not have to think of him as a force, an attribute or an impersonal influence. We owe him confidence, love, worship and surrender which rightly belong to Him as God.

**16. Praise:** In the doxology, we praise the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We confidently thank the Father and the Son for God's goodness and miracles in our lives but often we do not thank the Holy Spirit since we do not recognize him as a person. We will not have difficulty praising the Holy Spirit if we are conscious of his divine personality.

**17. Personal Relationship with the Holy Spirit:** If we think of the Holy Spirit as a mere influence or power, then our thought will be: How can I get hold of that power and use it. Such leads to selfishness and self-exaltation. But if we are conscious of the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person, then our thought will be, How can I enter into a relationship with him, how can the Holy Spirit get hold of me to lead and guide me. Thinking of Him as a person leads to self- renunciation, self- surrender and divine intimacy.

## **18. SOME ATTRIBUTES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

A person is not synonymous with a body. It is not necessary that we should touch a person in order to be assured of his personality. A person is a being who knows, feels and wills. There are so many places in the Scripture where personal attributes and characteristics are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. We shall examine only a few of them.

**19. KNOWLEDGE:** In the Scriptures knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. For example, in 1 Corinthians 2: 10 -11, we read, "But to us, though, God has given revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit knows the depths of everything even the depths of God. After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone except his own spirit within him; and in the same way, nobody knows the qualities of God except the Spirit of God". Here not only that knowledge is ascribed to the Holy Spirit but we are taught that the Holy Spirit as a Being knows everything even the deep things of God.

**20. WILL:** The Holy Spirit accomplishes different tasks according to his divine will. In 1 Cor 12: 11, we read, "But at work in all these is one and the same Spirit, distributing them at will to each individual". Here "will" is ascribed to the Spirit



and we are taught that the Holy Spirit is not a power at our disposal which we can get hold of and use according to our will but a person of sovereign majesty, who uses us according to His will. This distinction is of fundamental importance in our getting into the right relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is at this very point that many people go astray. They struggle to get possession of some mysterious and mighty power which they can make use of in their work according to their own will. The Holy Spirit cannot be used according to our will rather He uses us to accomplish his divine will.

**21. MIND:** The Holy Spirit as a person has a mind of his own. Hence, we read in Romans 8:27, “and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”. In this passage “mind” is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated mind is a comprehensive word, including the ideas of thought, feeling and purpose. So then, in this passage, we have this special and distinctive mark of personality ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

**22. LOVE:** We find the personality of the Holy Spirit brought out in a most touching and suggestive way in Romans 15: 30. We read, “Meanwhile I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Love of the Spirit, that in your prayers to God for me you exert yourselves to help me”. Here we have love ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The words “the love of the Spirit” show that the Spirit is a personality who can love and be loved. We often dwell upon the love of God the Father and God the Son but hardly dwell upon the love of God the Holy Spirit. Now, with this awareness we need to develop special love for God the Holy Spirit. We need to thank the infinite and eternal spirit of God for his love.

23. There are many other attributes of a person which the Scripture ascribed to the Holy Spirit. We may not treat them in details but we may mention some of them.

**The Holy Spirit Hears:** The Scripture testifies that the Spirit hears as we read in John 16:13, “whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and he will show you things to come”.

**The Holy Spirit Speaks:** “then the Spirit said to Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8: 29). While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down and go with them doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19- 20).

24. **The Holy Spirit Prays:** “Likewise the Spirit also helps us in our weakness; for when we do not know what we should pray for as we ought: the Spirit Himself

makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Spirit Teaches: For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hours what ye ought to say (Luke 12:12). “But the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrances whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

**25. The Holy Spirit Guides:** “When he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you unto all the truth” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit Comforts: “The Churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up and living in the fear of the Lord; comforted by the Holy Spirit, they continued to grow” (Acts 9: 31).

These are only a few of the personal attributes of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the Scriptures. We shall now mention briefly some individual relationships with the Holy Spirit as recorded in the Scripture.

The Bible is replete with different types of relationships which existed between people and the Holy Spirit both in the Old and New Testaments. We saw how the Spirit came down on David and began to use him to do mighty works (cf. 1 Sam 16). We also saw how the Spirit of God departed from Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 16: 14). We shall see further some ways people related with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

## **26. SOME WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Scripture testifies that the Apostles were all transformed on the day of Pentecost because “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves” (Acts 2:4). The Apostles were open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who made them witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles created a new human community.

Another good examples of one filled with the Holy Spirit is the Deacon, Stephen. The Bible describes Stephen as “a man full of the Holy Spirit”. In Acts 6: 8, we read that Stephen became a mighty preacher and performed miracles in the name of the Lord. Then “Stephen filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God’s right hand” (Act 7: 55). We can see that Stephen did great wonders and miraculous signs by the power of the Spirit. He was the channel, and through him flowed the power of God. It is evident that wherever there is a man full of the Holy Spirit, the same thing will happen. The power of God will be at work in such a person. Wherever a spirit-filled Christian

works, lives will be touched, souls will be saved and miracles will be performed for God the Holy Spirit works through human channels.

**27.** On the other hand, people can sometimes displease the Holy Spirit. The scripture records that some have lied to the Holy Spirit as did Ananias and the wife. Hence Peter asked, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (cf. Acts 5:3). Here we have the Holy Spirit represented as one who can be lied to. This goes further to show that he is a person.

**28.** Again, people can grieve the Holy Spirit. Such made Paul to warn the Ephesians, “and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4: 30). Grieving the Holy Spirit means to make him sad or sorrowful. It follows that in our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, we have to avoid thoughts, words, or actions that can sadden the Holy One dwelling within us.

**29.** In addition, the Scripture warns that some can quench the Holy Spirit and some can resist him. In Paul’s letter (1 Thessalonians 5:19) we read, “do not quench the Spirit”. Quenching suggests extinguishing like fire. Again, Stephen warned (Acts 7: 51), “you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! you always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you”. These words of Stephen the martyr to the unbelieving Sanhedrin shortly before his death show that some may know the truth yet refuse to accept it. Such would be resisting the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth.

Further some can displease the Holy Spirit through blasphemy. Our Lord Jesus Christ warns, therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven but the blasphemy against the Spirit not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12: 31-32). This is the most serious offense against the Holy Spirit. We should always avoid such.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT; THE ADVOCATE**

**30.** The Lord Jesus gives an office to the Holy Spirit. He says, “I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate, to be with you forever, even 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 with you” (John 14: 16 – 17). An advocate is a person who can defend and guide another. Recall that our Lord Jesus Christ had announced to the disciples that he was about to

leave them. An awful sense of desolation took possession of them. Sorrow filled their hearts (John 16:6). It was at this point that Jesus assured them that they shall not be left alone. He was going to the Father and would pray the Father to send them another advocate – the Holy Spirit. This promise has been kept. It has been fulfilled. And, the major duty or office of the Holy Spirit is that of an advocate. He is therefore our defender, our helper and our friend.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL IMAGES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### 31. HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The chief source of information regarding the Spirit of God is the Hebrew Bible, otherwise known as the Old Testament by the Christians. The work of the Holy Spirit as a Divine Person was very much known in the Old Testament. The Spirit's activity was inseparable from the work of God. There are copious references to the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Elohim with the designation *Ruach*, wind or breath in the Old Testament. Through this *Ruach*, the Spirit of God is alive and active. The Spirit hovered over the formless void and brought order into existence, (cf. Genesis 1:2); the Spirit breathed into Adam and made him a living man, (cf. Genesis 2:7). Again, the spirit of Yahweh is involved both in the anointing of David and withdrawal of favour from Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 16: 13-14). The Spirit of the Lord was the active agent in the institution of public offices among the people of God. He was in a significant way active in the establishment of the offices of the Judges and Kings. He inspired and led the prophets. The Holy Spirit was the spirit that restored life to the dry bones in the prophecy of Ezekiel. The Spirit experienced and hoped for by the people of God, was later promised to all mankind.

32. We can see that throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was active as the Spirit of God. While hovering over the face of the waters, (Genesis 1:2) the Spirit was preparing for the creative word of God to shape the world. Thus, the Holy Spirit was involved in creation, in bringing order to the created world, and preventing chaos. Again, the Old Testament presents the Holy Spirit as the principle of life. When God created Adam, he breathed into him "the breath of life" (Genesis 2: 7), and man became a living being. Cardinal Wuerl teaches that even though the animals have respiratory systems, even though they have lungs and they breathe, they do not have God's breath, the Holy Spirit. Yet that eternal "breath of life" is precisely what God breathed into Adam. Thus, God created Adam. Thus, God created Adam with the capacity for divine life and love then gave him his spirit to fulfill this remarkable capacity, (cf. Cardinal Donald Wuerl, *Open to the Holy Spirit*, p. 21). Similarly, in the famous dry bones account as recorded in the book of Ezekiel already mentioned, it was God's Spirit that breathed into the dead and dry bones the "breath of life" and they became "a great and immense army" (cf. Ezekiel 37: 1-9)

33. The Spirit communicates God's will and word through the prophets. The Spirit equips craftsmen and artisans (Such as Bezalel in Exodus 31: 3; 35: 30-35

and the skillful women who made priestly garments in exodus 38:3). The Spirit brings or inspires wisdom for leadership (cf. Number 11), equips for service (1 Samuel 16: 13 -14; Numbers 11: 24 -30), and brings good insight (Isaiah 11; 1-5: 42; 1-4). The Spirit further protects God's people through feats of strength that can hardly be imagined. It was the great wind of the Spirit that divided the Red Sea and dried the land (Exodus 14: 21). The wind of God (the Spirit) came with force and power. In Judges, the Spirit "took possession" of Gideon and used him to deliver Israel from the Amalekites (cf. Judge 3: 10 and 11:29). It was the Spirit that granted Samson extraordinary strength (Judges 14:6) and overwhelms Saul (1 Samuel 10: 5- 11; 19: 18-24)

34. The Old Testament presents the power of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit as sovereign. It was the Spirit who compelled the reluctant Prophet Ballam to bless God's people because the Spirit forbade him from cursing them. (cf Numbers 22-24). In the book of Samuel, we read that "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David, surrounded by his brothers, and the Spirit of the Lord seized on David from that day onward" (1 Sam 16:13). It was thus in the power of the Spirit that David challenged and killed Goliath. Thus, the Spirit of the Lord empowered the leadership of God's people in the Old Testament. Moses as a leader was so filled with the Spirit of God that he shared God's feelings with the people when they go against God. When Moses through the advise of Jethro, his father- in – law, chose seventy elders to assist him lead the people of Israel. God took part of the Spirit in Moses and put it on them (Number 11; 16-17).

35. One remarkable aspect of the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament is its special connection with the Prophecy of the Messiah (the Anointed One). In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Spirit anoints the Servant of God (Isaiah 11: 1-5: 61; 1-4). The seven-fold Spirit speaks of a complete and unlimited giving of the Spirit. This anointing leads to the fulfillment of the new covenant, the restoration of God's people, and judgement on the unbeliever (cf. Isaiah 42: 1-9). But, all of these only point the way to when God will bring a new heart to a revived people of God (Ezekiel 36:26, 27: 37;14); a time when "Old men will see visions, and young men will dream dreams", and the Spirit will be poured out upon 'all people" (Joel 2:28). This is an indication of the universal nature of God's salvation.

In all these, the Holy Spirit was not yet fully revealed as a person in the Old Testament. He was only known as the Spirit and power of God. The personhood and the divinity of the Holy Spirit was clearly and gradually revealed in the New Testament.

### 36. **HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The ultimate act of God's love was manifested when "in the fulness of time, God sent his own Son born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4) conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore very essential that Christians should know the important role played by the Holy Spirit in the redemption of the world.

The conception, baptism, public ministry and resurrection of Christ all happened by the power of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist, the prophet who links the Old and New Testaments says, 'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 3:11, 12; Mark 1:7,8; Luke 3: 15-18). Salvation has come. The Spirit as a dove, descends. What is predicted in the Old is now fulfilled in the New. Good to note that before the birth of Christ, the Holy Spirit had prepared for Christ a forerunner in the person of John the Baptist. The Scripture predicts that John "shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1: 15).

37. At the beginning of Christ's public ministry, he affirmed that he has been anointed by the Holy Spirit. He states, "the Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim Goodnews to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18). The New Testament presents the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth" who makes known the things of God and glorifies Jesus, who teaches us of God and convicts the world of sin (John 16:8). The Spirit regenerates human souls giving new birth to man (John 3:5-6), leads to true worship as worshippers must worship in the Spirit and truth (John 4:24-26). The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing (John 6: 63-70), and the Spirit promises greater things to come (John 7: 38-39), for "whoever believes in me ...rivers of living water will flow within them, by this he meant the Spirit..." In John 14:26 we read: "the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything". John 15:26 says, "when the Holy Spirit comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, he will be my witness", and will "abide with you and be in you" (John 14:17-18). In the same vein, the New Testament described the Holy Spirit as the advocate per excellence. He is presented as a Senior Advocate in Heaven shielding us from malicious accusations of our enemy, the devil. He is the Advocate sent to be with us on earth so that Christ will not leave us as orphans. The Holy Spirit teaches us, prays for us and defends us. He defends and pleads on our behalf before the Divine Court of God the Father and God the Son. In all, the New Testament presents the Holy Spirit as man's helper and best friend.

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BLESSED TRINITY**

**38.** The triadic nature of God is chiefly manifest in the New Testament. One of the most revelatory words about the Trinity as well as distinct personhood of the three persons came from Christ. In the great missionary mandate Christ ordered his apostles to make disciples of all nations, to further baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This shows each person unique and distinct.

**39.** There is evidence of intimate relationship between the three divine persons. For example, at the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him after His baptism, like a dove and the voice of the Father came from heaven, to proclaim Christ as the beloved Son. All the Gospels testify to the presence of the Trinity in this event. This shows love and unity of purpose. Commenting on this, Chromatius a fourth century Bishop of Aquileia says, that just as our first creation is the work of the Trinity, so our second creation is the work of the Trinity. The Father does nothing without the Son or the Holy Spirit, because the Father's work is also the Son's and the Son's work is also the Holy Spirit's. There is but one and same grace of the Trinity. Thus we are saved by the Trinity, since in the beginning we were created by the Trinity alone (cf. Chromatius, *Homily on Baptism and the Holy Spirit*, 18A).

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God. They play their different roles in full cooperation with each other. The Church acknowledges and professes her belief in one God, the Blessed Trinity, who are worshipped together and glorified.

## **HOLY SPIRIT AND IMAGES IN THE BIBLE**

**40.** There are manifestations of divine presence and power through different images in the Bible. These images are not God but they are symbols and signs through which God performs specific roles among his children. The Biblical images of the Holy Spirit as Wind, Oil, Water, Fire, Dove and Tongue are familiar to us.

These images only communicate some of the actions or specific functions of the Spirit at a particular time. They do not in any way reduce the Holy Spirit to an image, a thing, an influence or power. We shall comment briefly on these images



## **41. WIND**

Scripture paints a picture of what happened on the day of Pentecost. And, “Suddenly there came from Heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1). It is to be noted that the text speaks of the Spirit as being like a mighty rushing wind. It does not say that the Holy Spirit is a mighty rushing wind. The Holy Spirit is a person. He can decide to manifest in any form. Just as the Spirit of God gave life to Adam at creation, so at Pentecost the Spirit of God constituted a new family of God.

## **42. OIL**

Oil was a primary product to ancient societies, including the Jews. In biblical times, Olives were one of the main sources of oil for the Hebrews. In Deuteronomy 8:8, Olive oil is included in the list of blessings offered by the land of Canaan. With time oil gained several figurative meanings. Priests, prophets and kings were anointed with oil on assumption of office. The anointing of oil then became a symbol of consecration and conferring of authority. Anointing was supposed to confer holiness, inviolability and special relationship with God. Recall that Samuel anointed Saul (1 Samuel 10:1), the elders of Israel anointed David (2 Samuel 5:3), Zadok anointed Solomon (1 Kings 1:39), Elijah anointed Jehu as King (2 Kings 11:12), as well as Elisha as prophet (1 Kings 19:16). Anointing with oil became a very important element in religious ceremonies and assumption of offices.

In some way, the anointing with oil and the Spirit of God were associated by the Jews after the anointing of Saul by Samuel. After anointing the future first king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1), Samuel announced that the Spirit of the Lord will come upon Saul, he will enjoy special powers from God including ability to prophesy. He will be transformed into a changed man (cf. 1 Samuel 10:6). In the same day these prophecies were fulfilled after Saul was anointed. However, when Saul defaulted the Spirit left him and David was anointed by Samuel. When David was anointed, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1 Samuel 16:13). This shows the relevance of anointing in the Scripture as well as the link between anointing, the Spirit of God and success.

Later, the New Testament introduces the idea of direct anointing by the Spirit with the Spirit. Jesus reads Isaiah 61:1-2. “the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach Goodnews to the poor”. Jesus applies the concept to his experience (Luke 4:18-21). It follows that, in Jesus consciousness, he is the eschatological figure of the prophet Isaiah’s description, that is, the speaker and the messenger of Goodnews at the same time. As the Messiah, the “anointed one”

Jesus will promote liberation of all “exiles” of the unjust system of Satan. If important Priestly, Royal and Prophetic figures were anointed with oil by humans, he is anointed with the Spirit directly by God, as his mission is greater than theirs. It is not surprising, therefore, that the early believers referred to the anointing of Jesus as a key element for his healings and powerful acts, (Acts 10:38). By indicating the fulfillment of the prophecy “today” (Luke 4:21) in Nazareth, Jesus did not mean that the prophecy was exhausted on that particular day, but rather that the time had now come of which Isaiah Spoke. In a sense, the fulfillment of the Messianic anointing continues in Jesus’ achievements and in the derived anointings of the believers. A true believer should be able to say, “The Lord has anointed me with his Spirit to preach Goodnews and minister freedom”. We can say, therefore, that the anointing oil is a strong symbol of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us of the internal transformative power of the Spirit.

### **43. WATER**

Jesus often used water as an image of the Spirit. One major example is seen in this passage: On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:37-39). The Fathers of the Church also see water as a fitting image for the Holy Spirit. St. Irenaeus says like dry flour, which cannot become one lump of dough, one loaf of bread, without moisture, we who are many could not become one in Christ Jesus without the water that comes down from heaven. And like parched ground, which yields no harvest unless it receives moisture, we who were once like a waterless tree could never have lived and borne fruit without this abundant rainfall from above. Through the baptism that liberates us from decay we have become one in body; through the Spirit we have become one in soul... if we are not to be scorched and made unfruitful, we need the dew of God (cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* Lib 3, 17. 1-3)

**44.** St. Cyril of Jerusalem has an explanation of why Christ called the grace of the Spirit water. This is because all things are dependent on water; plants and animals have their origin in water. Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one in the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on throughout the whole of creation. It does not come down, now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it. In the same way, the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible,

apportions grace to each man as he wills. Like a dry tree which puts forth shoots when watered, the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit never changes, the effects of his action, by the will of God and in the name of Christ, are both many and marvelous. The Spirit makes one man a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the power of casting out devils, enables another to interpret Holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one man's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of ascetism, makes another oblivious to the needs of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people, but the Spirit himself is always the same. In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals his presence in a particular way for the common good. (cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, Cat. 16, *De Spiritu Sancto* i, 11 – 12.16). From both Irenaeus and Cyril, we can see how water is a good image of the Holy Spirit.

#### **45. FIRE**

In the Pentecost episode, the Scripture says, “And tongues, like flames of fire that were divided, appeared to them and rested on each of them” (Acts 2:3). Note that the Bible did not say, “Tongues of fire” but “tongues like flames of fire”. This is not physical fire. Again, the Bible often speaks of God as fire. We saw this in the book of Exodus where God encountered Moses. Moses experienced God as a burning bush (Exodus 3:2), though the bush was not burnt showing it was not physical fire. We read also that Moses went up onto a fiery mount. Sinai where God was. Psalm 97:1-6 presents a strong image of God involving fire. “The Lord reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the many coastlands be glad. Clouds and thick darkness are round about him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries round about. His lightnings lighten the world; the earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord; before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory”. Note that the fire of God gives light. It induces fear of God, love of God and change of heart. It does not literally burn. Fear and trembling suggest awe, admiration and reverence at the majesty of God. Scripture calls God a consuming fire (cf. Hebrew 12:29) and a refining fire (cf. Isaiah 48:10; Jeremiah 9:7; Zechariah 13:19; Malachi 3:3). It follows that our God who is a Holy Fire is not physical fire. He comes to dwell in us through his Holy Spirit. As a Holy Fire, he refines us by burning away our sins and purifying us. The Holy Spirit as fire changes everything He encounters. Nothing goes away from fire unchanged; it may be converted, purified, warmed, mollified, steeled or consumed. In the same way, nothing goes away unchanged after proper contact with fire of the Spirit.

Thus, God the Holy Spirit, like a Holy Fire, is within us. He is changing and transforming us, burning away sin, refining us, enlightening us, stirring the flame of God's love in us, and bringing us up to the temperature of God's glory. He is kindling in us the fire of divine love that gives light and warmth in our darkest and coldest moments. Little by little we become a burning furnace of God's love, and we give warmth, joy and peace to those around us. Thus, we are set afire by God's love. The Holy Spirit sets us on fire to make us glow with the light of love, inspiring those around us with the nobility of our lives. The Spirit purifies and prepares us to meet Him one day, to meet Him who is the Holy Fire and Eternal Love. The Fire of the Holy Spirit is the Fire of Divine Love.

#### **46. DOVE**

On the day of His Baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove. The Scripture says, "and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "you are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). It is important to re-emphasize that the Holy Spirit is not a bird or a body of any sort. Rather, He is seen physically as being like a dove. The Holy Spirit is God; He is the third person of the Holy Trinity.

The image of the Holy Spirit as a dove is reminiscent of the story of Noah. The dove which Noah sent out from the ark (at the third attempt) returned to him in the evening with an olive leaf, (cf. Genesis. 8: 6-11). For Noah, it was a sign that the bitterness and death which overwhelming sin had brought was then over. The dove brought Noah a sign of peace and a sign that the promise of God to cleanse the world was now fulfilled. Noah having passed through the flood within the safety of God's ark, may walk in newness of life. This is what the Holy Spirit does for us.

In the Holy Spirit we find peace, *Shalom*. When the Holy Spirit descends upon us, the long reign of sin is ended, and grace is now available to us. We having passed through the waters of baptism and the grace of forgiveness through the sacraments, may walk in newness of life. The Holy Spirit descends on us like a dove, (but not a dove), bringing peace, promise and every good news.

#### **47. TONGUES**

The Holy Spirit was also presented on the day of Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit is not a tongue. It is not physical fire either. However, through this we learn that one of the chief fruits of the Holy Spirit is to help us speak the truth and witness to others. A witness is one who speaks of what he has seen, heard, and experienced.

Of this need to witness, the Lord said, “you will be my witnesses, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). St Luke further records, “you are witnesses to these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:48-49).

St. John also added a confirmation of this fact saying, “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father- the Spirit of Truth who goes out from the Father-he will testify about me. And you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning (John 15: 26-27).

The Holy Spirit comes as tongues in order to strengthen us for our mission, for witness. The tongues of fire remind us that God wants bold, faith-filled and fiery Christians who are courageous witnesses in a doubting, deceitful and scoffing world. This image is a call to mission.

There are many other images and symbols of the Holy Spirit but we have chosen these to explain that the Holy Spirit is a person and not an image, or one of the many images.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION HISTORY

**48.** From the Scriptures, we can discern that the Holy Spirit has been deeply involved in the history of man's salvation.

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST

Every major event in the ministry and life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible involved the Holy Spirit. A contemporary theologian, Anne Hunt, has this to say about the Spirit and the entire life and mission of Christ Jesus.

Jesus is conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35). The Spirit is communicated at Jesus Baptism (Mk 1:8; Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16), after which the Spirit leads Jesus into the desert (Mk 1:12).

The Spirit accompanies and guides Jesus through his life and death. Finally, the Son sends the Spirit from the Father to the community (Jn 15:26; 16:7; 20:22). The Father sends the Spirit in the name of the Son (Jn 14:26).

He is the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom 8:11). The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father (Jn 14:16; Lk 11:13; Mt 10:20) and of the Son (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6, Phil 1:19). The Spirit is the one who identifies and confirms Jesus' identity. 'No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor 12:3).

The Spirit's mission is to mediate the presence of the risen Christ, to interiorize the redemption wrought by Christ, and to animate the ecclesial structures established by Christ. It is to complete what was established by Christ. Ultimately, the Spirit's mission is the incorporation of all humanity, and indeed the whole cosmos, in Christ and through Christ, to the Father (1 Cor 15: 28; Eph 1: 10; Col 1:19-20).

(A. Hunt, *Trinity, Christology and Pneumatology*, p.367)

**49.** It follows that from the conception, birth and baptism of Christ to his ministry, death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit was actively involved. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, anointed and fitted for ministry by the Holy Spirit, raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and after his resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit through the Father to his apostles. The entire life and ministry of Christ was like a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **50. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES AND THE EARLY CHURCH**

The day of Pentecost was unique in the life of the Apostles. Few days before the ascension of Jesus, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles through the Father (cf. Acts 1:8). Ten days after the ascension of Jesus, God fulfilled this promise in a most spectacular way (cf. Acts 2: 1-4). The Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and in the power of the Spirit they went public, preached to the crowd without fear and that very day, about three thousand converts were added to their number. The events of that day explain why the Pentecost is often called or referred to as the birthday of the Church.

The Ministry of the Apostles: After the Pentecost, the ministry of the Apostles as recorded in the Scriptures is like a history of the works of the Holy Spirit. God revealed to the Apostles, the mystery unknown to humans for generations. According to the Apostle Paul, “This mystery, as it is now revealed in the Spirit to his holy Apostles and Prophets, was unknown to humanity in previous generations” (Eph 3:3-5). It was through the Holy Spirit that the grace of God the Father revealed these mysteries to the Apostles. A careful re-reading of the Acts of the Apostles shows that we can comfortably refer to that book that chronicled the life of the early Church as *acts of the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit and the Apostles developed the Church of Christ according to the will of the Father. The Apostles were initially a bunch of timid, fearful men of their time, except for the spiritual enablement of the Holy Spirit. Without his presence and outside his power the Apostles could have been without fruits and impacts. But the Spirit turned their little into much and thus built the Church of God.

**51.** All service to God, immediately after the Pentecost, is ultimately dependent upon the gift of the Spirit. For example, those seven men chosen by the Jerusalem Church to serve the congregation, perhaps the beginning of the office of deacon, are described as men “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3).

God blesses significantly the witness of the Church because of the ministry of these men (Acts 6:7). When Stephen defends the Gospel and proclaims his special insights into its meaning and application, he is described as one full of the Holy Spirit. This fact enabled him to see the beatific vision (Acts 7:5). The Holy Spirit sends Philip to meet the Ethiopian in the desert, and subsequently the Spirit sends him off to other places of service (Acts 9: 29, 39). Saul of Tarsus, one time persecutor of the Church got converted to Christ, becomes a proclaimer of the faith he formally wasted; his qualification for service is that he has received the

Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Barnabas is sent by the Jerusalem believers to Antioch to determine the validity of the work there and to do whatever is necessary in that delicate and important situation because he is a man “full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (Acts 11:24). The Holy Spirit separates Barnabas and Saul for the work to which he calls them, and the mission to the Gentiles is launched (Acts 13:2- 4). The Holy Spirit guides his missionaries, opening doors and closing doors (Acts 16:17).

## **52. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH**

The communion between the Holy Spirit and the Church is so much that the two cannot be separated from each other. The Holy Spirit was first manifest in power at the moment the Church was born. Thus, by the continued presence of the Holy Spirit, the Church not only lives but acts. The Holy Spirit sustains the Church and is also the source of its life. The Holy Spirit is also the impetus and the power behind the Church’s missionary work today. It is through the Church that the Holy Spirit reaches the world. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the boldness to enter places where the light of Christ has not reached. It is the Spirit that gives these Christians the words which open the minds and hearts of those who have not believed in Christ. The Holy Spirit today still hovers over the waters, waiting for the new children of God to be born to eternity from the baptismal font.

Just as on the day of the first Christian Pentecost, so today, the Catholic Church is alive with manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Through the more than two millennia of the Church’s history, there has never been a single moment the Holy Spirit abandoned the Church. This is why in the Apostles creed, the Church professes her faith saying, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church...” The Holy Spirit is that promise of Christ to the Church and the divine guarantee that the Church will remain true to the end of time.

**53.** The axiom of St. Irenaeus is as valid today as it was during the Patristic time, namely: “where the Church is, there too is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there too is the Church”. (Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, p.142).

And, in the words of St. Augustine, “the Spirit is to the Church what the human soul is to the body. The Spirit is the principle that moves and inspires the whole”. (R. Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit*, p.140).

**54.** The Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, while commenting on this unique relationship affirms that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. Without the Holy Spirit the Church would be reduced to a great historical movement or a kind of humanitarian agency. But the Church is truly a living presence, unceasingly



formed and guided by the Spirit of the Lord. It is a living body whose vitality is precisely the invisible divine spirit (cf. Benedict XVI, Regina Caeli Message, May 31, 2009).

Pope Saint Paul VI, reminds us that the Holy Spirit animates and sanctifies the Church. He is her divine breath, the wind in her sails, the principle of her unity, the inner source of her light and strength. He is her support and consoler, her source of charisms and songs, her peace and her joy, her pledge and prelude to blessed and eternal life. (cf. E. O'Connor, *Pope Paul VI and the Spirit*, p.183).

We can conclude that the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit has been with the Apostles and with the Church from the day of the Pentecost till today.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

**55.** The Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us (CCC 1331). Every Sacrament is performed in the name of Jesus Christ, who in the power of the Holy Spirit acts upon us through sacramental signs. The Holy Spirit is the chief agent of transformation in each of the sacraments. The matter of the Sacrament is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. He works both objectively on the elements to transform them to Sacraments and subjectively works in the souls of the recipients, and in communion with Christ, to transform and give the desired effect. Central to all Sacramental celebrations is *epiclesis* which is the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Church invokes the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of sanctification.

#### **56. BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In the Sacrament of Initiation, the Holy Spirit is the transformative power that sanctifies the human person at the baptismal font, making them sons and daughters of God; the chosen people of God. The Holy Spirit assures the regeneration and the radical renewal of the baptized. He gives the justification and freedom from sin. Thus, He gives the new life which is the life of Christ. The Spirit incorporates the believer into Christ and in the Church. In baptism, the Spirit “christifies” the person and configures the candidate to Christ. The baptized therefore receives an indelible spiritual mark called character which cannot be wiped away. The Spirit makes the baptized children of God whom He brings into communion with God and with one another.

#### **57. CONFIRMATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Through the laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the candidate for Confirmation. The Spirit informs the words, enlivens them as he remains the very gift that is being imparted on the recipient. The prayer of the Bishop or his delegate during confirmation brings out clearly the role of the Holy Spirit. He prays, “All- powerful God, send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of right judgement and courage, the Spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the Spirit of wonder and awe in your presence...” This prayer is followed by the anointing with chrism.

While anointing the forehead, the Bishop prays, “N..., be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit”. The anointing with chrism and the accompanying words express the effects of giving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conforms believers more

perfectly to Christ and strengthens them to bear witness to Christ before the entire world. He helps the Christian to grow in Christ as he grants his seven gifts. The Spirit makes the recipient an adult Christian and ensures an effective integration of the candidate into Christ and the Church.

## **58. THE HOLY EUCHARIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Whenever the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, the Eucharistic elements are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. During the *epiclesis*, the priest lays his hands over the gifts and says: “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”. Going further in the Eucharistic prayer, the priest continues: “May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ, be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit” (Eucharistic Prayer II). The Holy Spirit makes Christ present. He makes the Paschal Mystery actual. He goes full circle impacting through the minister, the elements and the faithful. Firstly, he transforms the minister into another Christ and makes Christ present in the words and actions of the minister. Having transformed the elements into the body and blood of Christ by the first *epiclesis*, by the second *epiclesis* he transforms the community of faith into the mystical body of Christ. Note that we have two *epiclesis* in the Eucharistic prayers 2 to 4 and have it implicit in the Roman Canon. The Christ who gathers his Church in the Eucharistic celebration is the risen Christ and we cannot speak of the Lord in glory without the Holy Spirit. When the word of God is proclaimed in the Eucharistic assembly, it is the Spirit who makes the word living and life-giving. When the priest presides in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi capitis*), the ministry is animated by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit transforms and sanctifies and gives a foretaste of the future kingdom. It is the power of the resurrection.

## **59. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In the Sacrament of Penance, the Holy Spirit is the one who moves the sinner to continued conversion. He gives the pardon for sins and ensures the reconciliation with God and the Church. Through the sacrament, we receive new life in Christ. However, when we sin, we stain the image of God in us and disfigure his likeness. But, through the salvific work of Christ, we are reconciled, healed and restored by Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of reconciliation. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and prevents us from despairing by leading us to a deeper appreciation of the salvation in Christ. He moves our hearts towards the journey back to the Father’s embrace, like the prodigal son. Then, at the sacrament of reconciliation, by the power and overshadowing

presence of the Holy Spirit, we are absolved of our sins and reconciled with the Father by the Son.

The Holy Spirit has the power to forgive sins and given to the Apostles as seen in John 20:22ff. “Receive the Holy Spirit, for those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven”.

## **60. ANOINTING OF THE SICK AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

This sacrament is called sacrament of healing, a name it shares with the sacrament of reconciliation or penance because they impart healing, forgiveness and strength. While anointing the sick, the priest says, “Through this holy anointing may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit”.

The word anointing means in itself the gift of the Spirit and his power. The role of the Spirit is to sanctify the sick person for his recovery, imparting healing, forgiveness and strength. It is an eschatological gift, for the salvation of the whole person. The Holy Spirit does not act as a medicine rather it touches the roots of the sickness and comforts the person. The action may have some influence on the physical strength of the faithful if God wills.

The Spirit encourages trust in God who can do all things including healing and physical recovery. In addition, the Spirit gives strength to resist the temptations of the Evil one and anxiety about death. Thus, through the grace of this sacrament, the sick person is able to face his suffering with courage and faith in God.

## **61. HOLY ORDERS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In this sacrament of Holy Orders, the Holy Spirit transforms a baptized Christian man into another Christ. He makes him a ministerial priest, sharing in the priesthood of Christ, empowered to participate in the prolongation of the ministry of Christ.

Holy Orders include: Diaconate, Priesthood and Episcopate. A brief look at the prayers of consecration will help us discover the role of the Holy Spirit.

For the Deacons, the Church prays, “Lord, send forth upon them, the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace to carry out faithfully the work of the ministry”.

**62.** For the Priests, the Church prays, “Almighty Father, grant to these servants of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within them the Spirit of holiness...”

For the Bishops, the Church prays, “Pour out the power that comes from you, that of the sovereign Spirit, that which you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ and

which he granted to his holy apostles, who constituted the Church in various places as your sanctuary to the praise and glory of your name”.

In these prayers, the Holy Spirit is asked for and invoked as a Spirit of holiness and grace. The Spirit consecrates the candidate, he entrusts to this ordained minister the Church of God, assigns to him the ministry, and involves him wholly in the service of the apostolate. The Spirit consecrates a Christian man and makes him a sacrament of salvation. The ordained minister is configured to Christ by the power of the Spirit and he becomes a servant of all the faithful for their salvation. In all the ordained minister, like Christ, is anointed with the Spirit.

### **63. SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Holy Spirit makes the two Christians to share in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church (cf. Ephesians. 5:32). The Christian marriage is a vocation to be a sacrament of communion between Christ and His Church. It is a communion between the couple's matrimony and divine patrimony made effective by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit unites the married couple with each other, helps them attain holiness in their married life, assists them in the rearing and education of their children. Christ through his Spirit raised this union to the dignity of a sacrament so that it might more clearly recall and more easily reflect his own unbreakable union with his Church. Christian marriage is a communion of life and love and the Holy Spirit is invoked to be the strength of the spouses.

**64.** We recall that the sacraments are actions of Christ who is the source and foundation of the sacraments. But Christ acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. It follows that the Holy Spirit has a major role in all the sacraments. Each sacrament goes with the conversion which leads to salvation. The Spirit assists our on-going conversion.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

65. The Church teaches us that there are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit namely; Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Strength, Knowledge, Fear of the Lord and Piety. There are nine fruits of the Holy Spirit as given by St. Paul, they are Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control (Galatians 5: 22-23).

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit according to Catholic Tradition, are heroic character traits that Jesus Christ exhibited in their plenitude which the Holy Spirit freely shares with the members of Christ's mystical body, the Church. These traits are infused into every Christian as a permanent endowment at his baptism, nurtured by the practice of the seven virtues, and sealed in the sacrament of confirmation.

66. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the gifts of the Holy Spirit as “permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1830). They are also known as the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit, because they serve the purpose of rendering their recipients open and obedient to the movements of the Holy Spirit in their lives, helping them to grow in holiness and making them fit for heaven.

All the seven gifts are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ, but they are available to all Christians who are in a state of grace. Whenever we receive the sacraments worthily, we receive the seven gifts of the Spirit. “They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspiration” (CCC 1831).

#### **67. WISDOM**

The gift of wisdom which is considered as the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit is the perfection of faith and charity. It is a habit infused by God which makes a person responsive to the Holy Spirit. Through wisdom, we come to value properly those things which we believe through faith. The truths of Christian belief are more important than the things of this world, and wisdom helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly, loving creation for the sake of God, rather than for its own sake.

Wisdom is the perfection of faith which manifests in acts of charity. Where faith is a simple knowledge of the articles of Christian belief, wisdom goes on to a certain divine penetration of the truths themselves. The better we understand

those truths, the more we value them properly. Thus, wisdom assists us by detaching us from the world and making us love the things of heaven. Through wisdom, we judge the things of this world in light of the highest end of man, namely, the contemplation of God.

**68.** Such detachment, however, is not the same as renunciation of the world. Wisdom helps us to love the world properly, as the creation of God. The material world, though fallen as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, is still worthy of our love, we simply need to see it in the proper light. Wisdom allows us to do so. Knowing the proper ordering of the material and spiritual worlds through wisdom, we can more easily bear the burdens of this life and respond to our fellow men with charity and patience.

### **69. UNDERSTANDING**

The gift of understanding is a supernatural enlightenment given to man by God in the form of a habit whereby he grasps revealed truths easily and intimately. It is the second gift of the Holy Spirit and people sometimes have a hard time distinguishing it from wisdom. While wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, understanding allows us grasp, at least in a limited way, the very essence of the truths of the Catholic faith. Through understanding, we gain a certitude about our belief that moves beyond faith. It helps one see things through God's eyes as far as that is possible. Through understanding, the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind with intuitive insights into life's deepest mysteries and toughest questions. It differs from wisdom in that wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, while understanding allows us to penetrate to the very core of revealed truths. This does not mean that we can come to understand, for example, the mystery of the Trinity the way we might understand a mathematical equation, but that we become certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. Such certitude moves beyond faith, which "merely assents to what God has revealed".

**70.** When we are convinced through understanding about the truths of our faith, we can also draw conclusions from those truths and arrive at a further understanding of man's relationship with God. Understanding rises above natural reason, which is concerned only with the things we can sense, see and touch in the world around us. Thus, understanding is both speculative (that is concerned with intellectual knowledge) and practical because it can help us to order our actions towards our final end, which is God.

## **71. COUNSEL**

The gift of counsel enables man to judge and command individual acts. It aids and perfects the virtue of prudence. Counsel which is the third gift of the Holy Spirit, enables man to judge wisely. While prudence can be practiced by anyone, counsel is supernatural. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to judge how best to act almost by intuition. Because of the gift of counsel, Christians need not fear to stand up for the truths of the Faith, because the Holy Spirit will guide us in defending those truths. When prudence is assisted by sanctifying grace it becomes counsel. Counsel goes beyond prudence. Counsel builds on both wisdom and understanding to give us supernatural intuition. Building on wisdom, which allows us to judge the things of this world in the light of our final end and understanding which helps us to penetrate the very core of the mysteries of our faith, we have the perfection of prudence which is counsel.

With the gift of counsel, the Holy Spirit speaks, as it were, to the heart and in an instant enlightens a person on what to do. Through the gift of counsel, the Christian can act correctly in times of trial, speak without fear in defense of the Christian faith and choose correctly what will be most to the glory of God and man's salvation.

## **72. FORTITUDE**

The gift of fortitude gives the human person spiritual strength to resist evil. It is ranked as the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit. Fortitude gives us the strength to follow through on the actions suggested by the gift of counsel. While fortitude is sometimes called courage, it goes beyond what we normally think of as courage. Fortitude is the virtue of the Martyrs that allows them to suffer death rather than to renounce the Christian Faith.

Fortitude can be practiced by anyone, since, unlike the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues are not, in themselves, the gifts of God through grace but the outgrowth of habit. Fortitude is more than mere courage; it is always reasoned and reasonable. The person exercising fortitude is willing to put himself in danger, if necessary, but he does not seek danger for danger's sake. St. Thomas Aquinas ranked fortitude as the third of the cardinal virtues, because it serves prudence and justice the higher virtues. Fortitude is the virtue that allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in our will in the face of obstacles. Prudence and justice are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done, fortitude gives us the strength to do it. Fortitude is not foolhardiness or rashness, "rushing in where angels fear to tread". Indeed, part of the virtue of fortitude is



the “curbing of recklessness”. Putting our bodies or lives in danger when it is not necessary is not fortitude but foolishness.

Fortitude as a gift of the Holy Spirit, also allows us to cope with poverty and loss, and to cultivate the Christian virtues which allow us rise above the basic requirements of Christianity.

The saints in their love for God and their fellow humans, as well as their determination to do what is right, exhibit fortitude as a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, not merely as a cardinal virtue.

### **73. KNOWLEDGE**

The gift of knowledge (often called the science of the saints) enables man through some form of spiritual warmth of charity to judge everything in its relationship to his supernatural end. It is the fifth gift of the Holy Spirit. Many times, knowledge is confused with both wisdom and understanding. Like wisdom, knowledge is a perfection of faith, but whereas wisdom gives us the desire to judge all things according to the truths of the Catholic Faith, knowledge is the actual ability to do so. Like counsel, it is aimed at our actions in this life. In a limited way, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life the way God sees them. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can determine God’s purpose for our lives and live them accordingly. Knowledge enables those who have the gift to discern easily and effectively between the impulses of temptation and the inspirations of grace. It is rightly called the science of the saints.

### **74. PIETY**

The gift of piety considered as the sixth gift of the Holy Spirit enables man to show reverence both for God as a most loving Father and for men as the children of God. It is the perfection of the virtue of religion.

While we tend to think of religion today as the external elements of our faith, it really means the willingness to worship and serve God. Piety takes that willingness beyond a sense of duty, so that we desire to worship God, to serve Him out of love, the way we desire to honor our parents and do their wish.

Perhaps in none of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is this instinctual response more obvious than in piety. While wisdom and knowledge perfect the theological virtue of faith, piety is the moral virtue which a person is disposed to render to God the worship and service he deserves. It is instinctive affection to worship God arising from supernatural communication conferred by the Holy Spirit.

## **75. FEAR OF THE LORD**

The gift of the Fear of the Lord urges man to have a profound respect for the majesty of God. It aids and perfects the virtue of hope. This gift which is the seventh gift of the Holy Spirit is often misunderstood. Many people think of fear and hope as opposites, but the fear of the Lord confirms the theological virtue of hope. This gift of the Holy Spirit gives us the desire not to offend God, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace we need in order to keep from offending him. The fear of God arises out of love. The gift of the fear of the Lord confirms hope as it is not fear of punishment but the desire not to offend and the confidence that God will grant the grace. It is called the beginning of wisdom because it is founded on filial respect based on love of God. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit draw us closer to the Blessed Trinity and assist us to live happy, fulfilled lives on earth.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE HOLY SPIRIT: MAN'S HELPER AND FRIEND

**76.** Every year during the Holy Week, the Church prays God as she blesses the “oil of the sick”, to send the Holy Spirit, “man’s helper and friend” upon the oil, to transform the oil, giving it healing powers.

From our investigation so far, we can say without fear of contradiction that the Holy Spirit is not only a member of the Blessed Trinity but He is also our helper, advocate, guide and special friend. He helps us to know the Father and the Son, helps us to pray and transforms our weakness into strength. In addition, He is always there to defend us and sustain us with his gifts and fruits.

The Holy Spirit, as a member of the Trinitarian Family, is a divine person, though united in essence with the Father and the Son, is distinct in his personhood. He enters into affective and transformative relationship with us. To gain from such a relationship, knowing correct propositions or theoretical knowledge about him is certainly insufficient. A true Christian is supposed to have a transformative personal relationship with the Holy Spirit expressed in his life experience.

**77.** More than our human friends, the Holy Spirit is the comforter of the afflicted, counsellor, paraclete and friend. The Holy Spirit is a true spiritual friend with whom there is no fear, guile or disappointment. The Spirit, which is the greatest gift to the Church, is the audacity of God’s people in the world. He equips God’s people with gifts and charisms that help them, beginning from faith, hope and love. He helps us live like children of God, sons and daughters in the estate of their heavenly Father. He is our strength in weakness, our health in sickness, our comfort in sorrow and we ought to invoke him at the beginning, during and at the end of any major task or project. We call on the Holy Spirit to inspire, direct and perfect our projects.

He empowers us with courage to confront the potentates of this world and enables us to defeat principalities and powers that pose challenge to our progress by making us the principalities and embodiment of Godly powers that defeat forces of darkness and evil. He is the Spirit of holiness who anoints us with the oil of gladness, grace and victory over material and negative spiritual forces. He makes life in Christ Jesus real, inward and personal.

**78.** As our advocate, friend and helper, Christians invoke the Holy Spirit as succor in weakness. We recall that the Spirit of God at the incipient moment of creation, changed chaos into cosmos. But the Spirit continues to create today by inspiring and enlightening scientists, discoverers and scholars to bring about new prodigies

in the world. He continues creating, recreating and renewing creation and at the same time filling hearts with heavenly grace. Hence, daily we invoke the Holy Spirit to come and renew the face of the earth.

“Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of the faithful  
And enkindle in them the fire of your love  
Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created  
And thou shall renew the face of the earth...”

**79.** The Holy Spirit frees us from sins, leads us to repentance and teaches us to make our lives gifts for the health and wholeness of others. As the embodiment of love, the Holy Spirit turns our lives into sweetness with healing effects, he makes us radiate new fragrance of love and anointing. He empowers us to break new grounds of success in advancement of the Kingdom of God.

We shall now discuss further, the role of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives as our helper and friend.

➤ **80. The Holy Spirit helps Man to know God the Father**

In the teachings of St. Paul, the pivotal reality of Christian life is the work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the depth of human heart when the Spirit leads man to discover that God is his own Father and that he is a child of God. St. Paul made this point clear when he declared: “God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son crying, “Abba, Father” and so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir, by God’s own act” (Galatians 4:6).

When the Holy Spirit comes into our life, He makes us see God in a different way. He shows us the true face of God. The Holy Spirit leads us to discover the love of God who is both a friend and father, who, for our sake “did not withhold his own Son”. In fact, the Holy Spirit makes us see God as a truly loving Father. When we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the true childlike attitude blossoms in us and we spontaneously give expression to it in the cry “Abba, Father!” The Holy Spirit turns one who was a slave before into the child of the family as he turns fear into love. This is exactly what happens in a real, personal and existential manner in those who are “born in the Spirit”. It is the Holy Spirit who pours the love of God into our hearts. He gives us not just an abstract knowledge of that love but makes us feel it in reality and live it in practice. In all, the Holy Spirit makes us know the will of God and helps us know God as our Father.

➤ **81. The Holy Spirit helps Man to know God the Son**

In the Sacred Scripture, the Holy Spirit never puts himself forward but he always proclaims the Father and the Son. Indeed, the Holy Spirit reveals himself by making the other two persons of the Blessed Trinity known. The Spirit makes everything known without projecting himself. In this, we see how the symbols of wind and light are peculiarly apt as expressions of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. We cannot see the wind itself but we see what it does.

The Holy Spirit is the principle, the source of our knowledge of Jesus Christ. For instance, it was when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost that the meaning of the whole life and work of Jesus Christ became clear in such a way that Peter was able to convincingly proclaim that Jesus is both the Lord and Messiah (cf. Acts 2:36). St. Paul says that no one is able to say that Jesus is Lord except by the inward enlightening of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13).

**82.** Further, in his prayer for the Ephesians, St. Paul clearly brings out the work of the Holy Spirit in our knowledge of the mysteries of Christ: “ In the abundance of His glory may He through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God’s holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:16-19).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus himself says that the Holy Spirit will take what belongs to him and proclaim it to the disciples. The Spirit will also remind the disciples all that Jesus has taught them. The Spirit will lead them into the fullness of truth concerning who the Father is and who the Son is. Indeed, the Holy Spirit will bear witness to Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and make him real in the daily life of every Christian.

**83.** The Spirit not only empowers us to proclaim Jesus to the world but testifies to us about Jesus for our relationship with him (John 16: 12-15) also (Ephesians 2: 18, 3:16).

The Spirit will take the things of Jesus and reveal them to us, glorifying Jesus as Jesus himself glorified the Father, (John 16: 14-15; 7: 18, 39; 17:4). Note that as soon as he returned to his followers after the resurrection, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit so that they would continue to know him (John 16:16; 20:20-22).

#### ➤ **84. The Holy Spirit helps Man in Prayer**

This is an area where the help of the Spirit is very crucial. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He helps in our prayers by amplifying, clarifying and facilitating our communications with God the Father through God the Son. St. Paul writes, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Ephesians 6:18). In Romans 8:26, the Apostle Paul says: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”. This means that it is the Holy Spirit who helps Christians to come boldly to the throne of Grace, reminding us that through our union with Christ, we are indeed the children of God and joint heirs with Christ. Therefore, when we cry out, “Abba, Father”, we are heard by a gracious, loving Father. The Holy Spirit, then, helps us in prayer to recall who we are and to comprehend the grace of the Lord to whom we are praying. When believers pray in the Spirit, they are being led, instructed and moved with the Spirit’s powerful enabling. We need to ask the Lord to help us always to pray in the Spirit with praises, confessions, thanksgiving and supplications.

**85.** The Holy Spirit also helps us to pray for one another, using numerous Christian links uniting us as one family in Christ to pray for one another. Paul writes, “with this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6: 18). We should always ask the Holy Spirit to help us find at least a parish or community with whom we can pray for our spiritual growth and advancement. Jesus said, “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18: 19-20).

#### ➤ **86. The Holy Spirit helps Man in his Spiritual Battle**

The same Holy Spirit who led Jesus during his battle with the devil in the wilderness is available to lead all believers in their spiritual battles. It was the Spirit who took Jesus into the wilderness and gave him the power to triumph over the tempter. The same Spirit is our companion today training “my hands for war and my fingers for battle” (Psalms 144:1).

**87.** St. Peter tells us that “the enemy is moving around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). This word “enemy is not just a figurative expression of difficulties and challenges of life but “an evil one and his demons” which the Scripture keeps warning us about. St. Paul made his warning very loud

as he says, “For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle but against the principalities and the ruling forces who are the masters of darkness in this world and the spirits of evil in the heavens. That is why you must take up all God’s armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance on the evil day, or stand your ground even though you exert yourselves to the full” (Ephesians 6:12).

Jesus went into the wilderness in obedience to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Having triumphed over the devil, “Jesus filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, returned to Galilee” (Luke 4:14). When Christ was accused of casting out devils by the power of the prince of demons, He made this solemn declaration: “If it is through the Spirit of God that I cast out devils, know that the Kingdom of God has overtaken you” (Matthew 12:28).

**88.** This is a clear indication that Jesus himself was deeply convinced that his victory over the devil is from the operations of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit equips man (the followers of Jesus) with all the spiritual weapons of warfare. He teaches us the truth that we need to be protected from the false accusations of the devil. Truth is essential if we are going to be exposed to all kinds of attacks from the world, the flesh and the devil.

The Holy Spirit teaches us all the truth we need to know. It is the Holy Spirit that increases the quality and quantity of our Faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the enemy. St. Paul says that we should always carry “the shield of faith so that you can use it to quench the burning arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16). The Holy Spirit gives this faith to those who have trusted him and he uses them in ways that cannot be done through human strength. Further, St. Paul enjoined all Christians to “take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The word of God is a deadly weapon against our spiritual enemies for the Scripture confirms that “the word of God is like a fire and a hammer” (Jeremiah 23:29).

### ➤ **89. The Human Body as Temple of the Holy Spirit**

The Scripture does not see the human body as an insignificant adjunct to the human person, rather as integral to our reality as persons. The human body was created by God himself, made and shaped by his own hands. In the incarnation, the human body was personally united with the Divine Word and in baptism, the human body has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the human body, as the Scripture says, is in truth “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Cor 6:19).

Some erroneous teachings present the body and the Holy Spirit as enemies. This is very wrong. It is precisely in our body, which is the element that links us directly and intimately to the world, that the Holy Spirit dwells. Thus, Christians are called to give glory to God in their body. It is therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the body and to enable it achieve its purpose. St. John Chrysostom described the relationship this way: “He gives us the body so that, as we together become one with him, we may have a share in the Holy Spirit. For in fact, the reason why the word of God came to us in the body and as the Gospel says, was made flesh was that, since we were not able to have a share in him as word, we might be one with him as flesh.... This communion with the Spirit of Christ is the reason why we treat our bodies in an honorable way, as holy” (Easter Homily of St. John Chrysostom, sch 36, p.91).

**90.** The body of every Christian should radiate the glory of God just as the face of Moses radiated the glory of God after being with God on the mountain. Moses spent only 40 days with God on the mountain but Christians carry the glory of God who dwells in them forever. They should radiate more glory than Moses whose glory faded with time.

It is the Holy Spirit that rejuvenates the human body, giving it new strength and new energy daily. The Spirit also heals our bodies. This is the faith the Church expresses in the sacrament of anointing of the sick. This sacrament is no longer withheld until the moment of death but is conferred whenever someone is seriously sick. Thus, in this sacrament, we not only expect that the sins of the individual will be forgiven but also that “the prayer of faith will save the sick person and the Lord will raise him up” (James 5:15).

### ➤ **91. The Holy Spirit helps Man to discern the Signs of the Time**

St. Paul mentions a specific gift of the Holy Spirit which he described as discernment (cf. 1 Cor 12:10). Discernment consists in putting every spirit to the test. St. John advised, “Do not believe in every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4: 1).

The Venerable Fathers of Vatican II emphasized the importance of discernment when they said that, “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times, and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in a language intelligible to each generation she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand



the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings and its often-dramatic characteristics” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4).

**92.** Through the gift of discernment, the Holy Spirit helps man to evaluate situations and to direct his choices, not only on the basis of human wisdom and prudence, but also in the light of the supernatural principles of faith. Christians should therefore entrust themselves in every way and for everything to the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must walk with the light of the Holy Spirit, just like the Israelites who at every stage of their journey, whenever the cloud rose from their dwelling, the Israelites would resume their march (to the land of promise). If the cloud did not rise, they would not resume their march until the day it did rise” (cf. Exodus 40: 36-37).

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT MAN’S BEST FRIEND**

**93.** The Church invokes the Holy Spirit as man’s helper and friend. We have mentioned in this write-up, how the Holy Spirit is our helper. But the Holy Spirit is more than our crisis-manager and productivity officer. The Spirit wants a relationship with us, He wants to be our friend. The Bible says that, “A man who has friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). Sometimes, people complain that they do not have friends. It may be simply because they are not friendly themselves. Be friendly and you will have friends. It is consoling to know that the Holy Spirit is available for our friendship. There is no human being on earth whose friendship can compare with that of the Holy Spirit. He understands us, He is the Spirit of God who knows and sees every part of us. He is a faithful friend who loves us in spite of our inadequacies. He looks at us in the light of the blood of Jesus. He knows who we are as the redeemed children of God. He therefore defends us as our advocate, gives us his gifts and sustains us with his fruits.

#### **➤ The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate**

**94.** In the Gospel, we see Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit as the Advocate. Some other translations of the Bible render this word as Counselor, Consoler, or Comforter. The question that comes to mind is, why so many different translations of the same word? The word in question is “*Paracletus*”. It is full of meaning, very difficult to translate, and these are all acceptable translations of this profound word. Each of these other words gives us an idea of who the Holy Spirit is and what he does for man.

In many languages, the word ‘advocate’ is the same as the word for a lawyer. So, like an attorney in court, the Holy Spirit represents and defends us before God.

But, unlike a lawyer in court, the Holy Spirit does not stand beside us but instead dwells inside of us, appealing to the Father on our behalf from within our souls. In total contrast to the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Bible speaks also of the Devil as our accuser, “the accuser who night and day accuses us before God” (Revelation. 12:10).

You can imagine a courtroom scene where you are the defendant, the Holy Spirit is your attorney, and the prosecutor is Satan. After all the accusations, evidences and perhaps lies from Satan, the Holy Spirit defends not on grounds of your merits alone (If you have any) but on grounds of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross by which he has won for us the atonement for our sins and the mercy of God our heavenly Father.

**95.** The Holy Spirit acts as our advocate not only by securing us a place in the world to come but also directing us in this world. As a faithful friend, He is always near us to guide, lead and provide.

The Holy Spirit travels with us in the journey of life. He works through our consciences, (provided they have been formed) convicting us of sin and urging us to follow the law of the Lord. When we are in doubt, unsure of what path to follow, the Spirit guides with the light of truth. He is always there for us as a true friend.

**96.** From the name we know, the Holy Spirit is a comforter, He is a consoler. Only a true friend can console and comfort you. In the ups and downs of life, in this world called “valley of tears”, we certainly need consolation. The Holy Spirit consoles us with peace that comes from a clean conscience not with false or transitory pleasures that may come from evil. He consoles us with holiness and friendship with God.

➤ **The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with love**

**97.** The Church describes the Holy Spirit as the fruit of the love between the Father and the Son. If the Holy Spirit is nothing but the love of God personified, it means that when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, he is invariably filled with love. This was what happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. When the Bible reports that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, it means nothing else than they were all filled with God’s love. Thus, the Pentecost was an experience, a shift from the slave-heart full of fear to the filial-heart full of love and courage. It was an experience filled with overwhelming intensity of God’s love for the Apostles. One can say that the Apostles were literally “baptized in love”. That was what moved them so much that some people thought they were

drunk (cf Acts 2:13). The sudden change in the lives of the Apostles can only be explained by the fire of divine love which was at work in them. Indeed, every time someone has a genuine, strong experience of the Holy Spirit, the most vivid memory of the moment that the person retains is of an intense perception of the Father's love.

This is the most beautiful experience of any person's life, that is to know that one is loved personally by God. It is to feel oneself lifted by the love of the Trinity and to find oneself in the flood of love that flows between the Father and the Son, enfolded in their love. This is what the Holy Spirit accomplishes in our life.

➤ **The Holy Spirit bears fruits in us**

**98.** St. Paul enunciated the fruits which the Holy Spirit bears in the life of Christians. He says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5: 22-23). Each of these fruits is produced by the Holy Spirit's active presence in our daily activities. We shall look at these fruits individually and find out the extent they are in our lives.

**99. Love:** Love here refers to the unconditional goodwill towards others. It is agape, the deliberate attitude to do good to others whether they deserve it or not.

**100. Joy:** This is gladness that is completely independent of the good or bad things that happen around us. It is supernatural gladness given by God's Spirit. It is not dependent on material comfort or mundane successes.

**101. Peace:** This is the peace that comes from grace. It is not the absence of turmoil but the presence of tranquility even while in a place of chaos. It is a sense of completeness and wholeness that comes from faith in God. It is the "peace that passes all comprehension" (Philippians 4: 6-7).

**102. Patience:** This is maturity at its peak. Other words which describe the meaning of this word include: long-suffering, lenience, forbearance, perseverance and steadfastness. It is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing it out or paying back with the same ill attitude. It is the ability to reach the breaking point without being broken.

**103. Kindness:** This is goodness which anticipates the needs of others. When kindness is at work in a person's life, the person looks for ways to adapt to meet the needs of others even before they plead for help. It is a moral goodness that overflows, it is also the absence of malice.

**104. Goodness:** Goodness reflects the character of God. When goodness is at work, goodness in you desires to see goodness in others. It may sometimes demand confronting or rebuking others to bring out goodness in them as Jesus did to the money changers in the temple.

**105. Faithfulness:** A faithful person is one with integrity. He is a stable, responsible and reliable character. Such a person is one to whom others look at as an example, someone who is truly devoted to others and to God. Our natural tendency is to be selfish, to be in-charge or dominate. But the spirit-controlled faithfulness shows itself in the life of one who always seeks the good of others and the glory of God.

**106. Gentleness:** Gentleness is meekness, it is not weakness. Gentleness is not without power. It just chooses to defer to others. It forgives others, corrects with kindness and lives in tranquility.

**107. Self-Control:** Self-control is choosing to be controlled by the Spirit of God. Our sensual desires, Scripture tells us, are continually at odds with God's Spirit and always want to be in-charge. Self-control is saying no to the flesh and yes to the Spirit, allowing the Spirit to be in-charge.

### ➤ **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

**108.** In the words of St. Peter on the day of the Pentecost, Peter said to the crowd, "The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God is calling to himself" (Acts 2:39). Therefore, all we need to do is to be fully convinced that this promise of the Holy Spirit made by Jesus is also meant for us.

As we conclude this chapter, based on our reflection so far, we can say with every conviction that the Holy Spirit is our helper and friend. With his sevenfold gifts and superabundant fruits, He provides for us what ordinary friends cannot provide and does for us what many other friends cannot do. He is indeed our greatest helper and best friend.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**109.** St. Paul tells us that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). The essence of the spiritual life in this regard is what we can call the “take over” of our hearts by an infinitely superior power, namely, the Holy Spirit. In the life of Mary, we can see total cooperation and willing abandonment to the Spirit. Mary preeminently exemplifies this “take over” by the Spirit. Before the birth of Christ, the Holy Spirit overshadowed her and she conceived. Thus, from the beginning of Christ earthly life, the Spirit was always present to Him and his mother. We shall look at some of these encounters.

- **The Immaculate Conception**

**110.** The dogma of Immaculate Conception was promulgated formally by Pope Pius IX with the Papal Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*. He wrote that “the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception by a singular grace and privilege of the Almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, savior of the human race, preserved from all stain of original sin”. This act of preservation from original sin was done in and by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit fashioned Mary to become the Mother of God. The life of Mary is a typical example of the type of transformation the Spirit can bring in our lives.

- **The Annunciation (Lk 1:26-36)**

**111.** In biblical terms, overshadowing indicates the presence of God. We see this overshadowing throughout the Old Testament. For example, in Exodus 40:34-38, ‘then the cloud covered the tent of meeting’. Again, in 1 Kings 8:9-11, the cloud rests upon the temple when the Ark was placed within it.

The overshadowing cloud of the Holy Spirit indicates the presence of God. The cloud has no definitive shape, it is shapeless and therefore boundless. It is the same with the Holy Spirit. The Christian tradition puts forward many symbols for understanding the Spirit. These symbols do not tell us what the Spirit is, because we know the Spirit is God. Our symbols for the Spirit tell us about what the Spirit does. Our symbols for the Spirit help us to understand the acts, works and power of the Spirit in the life of the Church and every Christian. Hence, we can look at the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was made holy not by a man willing it, but by God willing it. The cloud rested upon the Ark. The language and symbolic ideas are used in the scene of the Annunciation. Christ is the New Covenant between

God and man, the lasting covenant for all time, and Mary the one who bore him in her womb, is the Ark. She is the Ark of the New Covenant, through the cloud of the Spirit resting upon her making the conception of Christ possible. The Spirit makes life possible, if we are open to His presence. He is the Lord and giver of life, “*Dominus et vivificantem*”. Mary is the preeminent witness to this truth about the Holy Spirit.

- **The Visitation (Luke 1:39-42)**

**112.** The Gospel according to St. Luke shows us that Mary is fully alive in the power of the Holy Spirit, for when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth there is a veritable explosion of Holy Spirit power at the very sound of Mary’s voice (cf. Luke 1:39-56). Everything in Mary’s life is taking place under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Mary, out of love for her family, goes to be with her cousin. Love does not isolate a person but pushes the person to go out and share love. Through the presence of Mary, we see the love given to her by the Spirit, Jesus Christ, being shared with Elizabeth. The love of the Spirit knows no bounds, because even the unborn child, John the Baptist, responded with joy and leapt in his mother’s womb because he experienced the divine love of the Spirit. The community being formed now in the house of Zechariah, is one of joy and love, with its foundation being the life given by the Spirit.

- **The Pentecost**

**113.** Mary is always included among the first community of believers in Jerusalem according to the recordings of St. Luke. She is among the central characters that formed the bridge between the story of Jesus and the path of the Church. The account from Acts 1:14 is a summary that corresponds to the most ancient tradition of the Church of Jerusalem and that included one of the Church’s first affirmations regarding Mary. She is presented as “the Mother of Jesus”. As an irreplaceable witness of the birth and hidden life of Jesus, Mary guarantees the true humanity of the Son of God, who by the power of the Holy Spirit was made flesh in her flesh.

Pope John Paul II states, “In the nascent Church, Mary passes on to the disciples her memories of the incarnation, the infancy, the hidden life and the mission of her divine Son as a priceless treasure, thus helping to make Jesus known and to strengthen the faith of believers” (Papal Audience, May 28,1997).

**114.** Mary has already experienced the working of the Holy Spirit. It was through his creative power that she could become a virgin-mother. But, “it was appropriate that the first outpouring of the Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of her divine motherhood, should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at the foot of the cross, Mary was entrusted with a new motherhood, which concerned Jesus’ disciples. It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit. The Blessed Virgin therefore wanted it for the fruitfulness of her spiritual motherhood” (John Paul II, Papal Audience, May 28, 1997).

Similarly, reflecting on this, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, has affirmed that “there is no Church without Pentecost and no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary” (Regina Caeli, May 23, 2010). In fact, in her profound humility and virginal love, Mary has become the spouse of the Holy Spirit. By her faith, hope and charity, Mary is a prototype of the Church. She is so emptied of herself and so full of love for God’s will, that the Holy Spirit is pleased to continuously pour out Graces on her soul and attend to her prayers for the early Church.

However, this experience of prayer with Mary, to invoke the Holy Spirit, is not something that belongs to the past. Pope Benedict said that “wherever Christians gather in prayer with Mary, the Lord gives His Spirit” (Regina Caeli, May 23, 2010). At Pentecost, Mary prayed with the disciples and the Lord sent the Holy Spirit.

- **The Assumption (Rev 12:1)**

**115.** The old catechism says this about the Assumption that, “Mary experiences immediately what we all will experience eventually, a bodily resurrection like Christ’s own”. It is through the Holy Spirit that the resurrection occurs. Love conquers death, a key aspect of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit as St. Augustine teaches, is the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, poured forth for all of us. Divine love personified is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the unique relationship of Mary to the Spirit is yet again expressed through her assumption. Her life shows us how the Spirit makes it possible that we will be made anew. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the resurrection which Christ calls all to, at the end of time.

Like Mary, we are called to be like Jesus, which is done in and through the Spirit, who fashions and shapes us. Since the Spirit is fashioning and making us into His holy temple (1 Corinthians. 3:16-17). The final work of the Spirit in our lives will

be manifested in our bodily resurrection from the dead. The Assumption of Mary not only witnesses to this reality but helps to strengthen our hope in it.

- **The Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary**

**116.** According to Pope Paul VI, the Assumption did not put an end to Mary's mission as an associate to the Spirit of Christ in the mystery of salvation. Even though she is now absorbed in joyful contemplation of the Blessed Trinity, she continues to be spiritually present to all her redeemed children, being constantly inspired in this noble function by the uncreated love which is the soul of the mystical body and its ultimate source of life (cf. Paul VI, *Letter: The Holy Spirit and Mary*, May 13, 1975).

The Fathers of the Vatican Council II explained the motherhood of Mary when they said that, "this maternity of Mary in the order of Grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home" (*Lumen Gentium*, 62).

**117.** Pope Francis described Mary as the Mother of evangelization saying that "with the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people, she joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her, we could never truly understand the Spirit of the new evangelization. As a true mother, She walks at our side, she shares our struggles and She constantly surrounds us with God's love" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* no.284).

The Blessed Virgin Mary is therefore our spiritual mother and model. She has trodden the straight and narrow path which leads to sanctity; before us She has carried the cross, before us She has known the ascents of the Spirit through suffering. Sometimes, perhaps, we do not dare to look at Jesus the God-Man, who because of his divinity seems too far above us; but near him is Mary, His Mother and our Mother, a privileged creature surely, yet a creature like ourselves, and therefore a model more accessible for our weakness. Mary comes to meet us, to take us by the hand, to initiate us into the secret of her interior life, which must become the model and norm for us.



## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

Having known that the Holy Spirit is our helper and friend, what can we do to benefit from this relationship?

- **Devotion to the Holy Spirit**

**118.** We need to be more devoted to the Holy Spirit. Devotion is defined as the deep disposition of the will to do promptly what concerns the worship and service of God. Essential to devotion is readiness to do whatever gives honor to God and enhances our relationship with him. Devotion to the Holy Spirit brings us ever closer to the heart of God the Father and God the Son.

We can practice this devotion by constant invocation of the Holy Spirit in our private and public prayers. The traditional prayer of the Church invoking the Holy Spirit should be known, internalized and used always to invite the loving presence and sanctifying action of the Spirit in our lives. The prayer: “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your divine love”, “Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created” “And you shall renew the face of the earth”.

“O God, who did instruct the hearts of your faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us that we might be truly wise and always rejoice in His consolation, through Christ our Lord”, Amen.

The need to always say this prayer at all times cannot be over emphasized.

- **Making the Sign of the Cross**

**119.** Making the sign of the cross with devotion brings us closer to the Blessed Trinity especially the Holy Spirit who enjoys from us equal reverence with the Father and the Son whenever we make the sign of the cross. The fatherly love of the Blessed Trinity accompanies us and we become the temple of the Trinity.

- **Walking in the Spirit**

**120.** Walking in the Spirit is being conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives. St. Paul teaches us to walk in the Spirit by putting to death the deeds of the flesh. The Holy Spirit creates in us a desire to be like Christ.

- **Novena to the Holy Spirit**

**121.** The Novena to the Holy Spirit is the prototype of all novenas because, in a sense, it was instituted by Christ himself when he sent his apostles back to Jerusalem to wait in prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit. We may always remember that Mary, the Apostles and the Disciples spent nine days between our Lord's Ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in "constant prayer" (Acts 1:12-14).

Some see this as the model not only for the novena to the Holy Spirit but for all other novenas as well. The novena is a prayer of hope that God will intervene with his divine power. It is also a prayer of faith that God will keep his fatherly promises as he did by sending the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ.

**122. The Fire of the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the fire of love. He is the fire of holiness, He is the fire of truth and justice. The Holy Spirit consumes evil and strengthens goodness, not with physical fire. True devotion to the Holy Spirit transforms us into agents of divine love and true sons and daughters of God.

**CHAPTER TEN**  
**PRAYER**

**123.** Almighty and ever-living God, you fulfilled the Easter promise by sending us your Holy Spirit. May that Spirit unite the races and nations on earth to proclaim your glory.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

*(From the Collect of the Vigil Mass for Pentecost)*

**Given in Onitsha, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, on 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Ash Wednesday, in the year of our Lord 2022**

**MOST REV. VALERIAN M. OKEKE**

*Archbishop of Onitsha*

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