

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

by Fr. Antony

The Holy Spirit

“Holy Spirit” is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. He is coequal with the Father and the Son, in an eternal exchange of love. The Church has received this name from the Lord and professes it in the Baptism of her new children. He is the Lord and Giver of life and the Sanctifier.

The term “Spirit” translates from the Hebrew word *ruah*, which, in its primary sense, means ‘breath, air, wind.’ Jesus indeed uses the sensory image of the wind to suggest to Nicodemus the transcendent newness of him who is personally God’s breath, the divine Spirit.

When Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, he uses the term “*Paraclete*”, which literally means ‘he who is called to one’s side’ or ‘advocate’ (**Jn. 14: 16, 26; 15:26; 16:7**). “Paraclete” is commonly translated as ‘consoler.’ He also calls the Holy Spirit ‘the Spirit of truth’ (**Jn. 16:13**). We find some other titles in the scripture: the Spirit of promise (**Gal. 3:14, Eph. 1:13**), the Spirit of adoption (**Rom. 8:15**), the Spirit of Christ (**Rom. 8:9**), the Spirit of the Lord (**2Cor 3:17**), the Spirit of God (**1Cor. 6:11, 7:40**) and the Spirit of glory (**1Pet. 4:14**).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SALVATION HISTORY

From the very beginning the Spirit is at work, but many times the work of the Spirit is hidden. The Holy Spirit was present at the time of the creation (**Gen. 1:2, 2:7**). He appeared to the Israelites as a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night (**40:36-38**). He also spoke through the prophets. In the New Testament we see that the Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and ‘overshadowed’ her, so that she might conceive and give birth to a son, Jesus (**Lk. 3:21-22**). We also find the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove at the time of the baptism of Jesus (**Mt. 3:16**).

HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would come and remain forever with his church (**Jn. 14:16**). At the day of Pentecost, Jesus kept his promise and he poured out his Spirit upon the Apostles and on the big crowd. From that day onwards, the mission of Christ and the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may bear much fruit. The Holy Spirit guides, protects, and sanctifies the church. He, through the sacraments, heals the wounds of sin, strengthens and enlightens us.

SYMBOLS OF HOLY SPIRIT

Water: by the invocation of the Holy Spirit water becomes the efficacious sign of new birth.

Wind/Breath: unseen energy (**Creation – Genesis 1:2**).

Anointing: anointing with oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

Fire: symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's action (**Lk 3:16**). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills the Apostles and others in the form of tongues "as of fire" (**Acts 2:3-4**).

Dove: after the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down on him (**Mt 3:16**).

Cloud & Light: this is in the theophanies of the Old Testament (**Ex 24:15-18, 33:9-10, 40:36-38**).

The hand: Jesus heals the sick and blesses the little children by laying hands on them (**Mk 6:5, 10:16**).

THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude (courage), knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (**Is11: 1-2**). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the children of God can bear much fruit; the fruits of the Spirit are: love, Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (**Gal 5:22-23**).