



Catechism Commentary 18

Commentary

I love the section of the Creed that says,

“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.”

We believe that the Holy Spirit, as the Love that is shared by the Father and the Son, is an equal member of the Blessed Trinity. As such he is Lord and exercises the same divine authority as the Father and the Son. God the Father created the whole material and animate world through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that sustains everything that exists, including you and me, in existence.

Furthermore it is the Holy Spirit that gives us new life in Christ thereby making us adopted sons and daughters of the Father. As a result, the Holy Spirit is worthy of the same reverence and honour as the other two members of the Blessed Trinity. It is he who enables us to cry out in union with Jesus, Abba! Dear Father (Gal 4:6).

It is the Holy Spirit who taught the prophets of the Old Testament what to say, and it was the Holy Spirit also, who enabled those promises to be fulfilled by Christ. For example, in Is 7:14 we read, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” That promise was fulfilled when the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus through as a result of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.

The *CCC* tells us that the Holy Spirit has a number of names. Here are three of them.

- **Paraclete:** i.e., one who is called like a lawyer to plead one’s cause. The word is often translated as a counsellor or advocate because he represents the best interests of the person.
- **Spirit of Truth;** whereas we are told that the devil is a liar, we are told that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth who leads believers into the truth about God and what he said through Jesus. In Jn 16:13 we read, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”
- **Spirit of Christ:** On a few occasions in the New Testament the Spirit is referred to in this way, e.g., in Phil 1:19 we read, “For I know that through

your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.”

The *CCC* also refers to six material symbols which represent the immaterial Holy Spirit namely living water, anointing, fire, cloud, imposition of hands, and the dove. Each one highlights some characteristic of the Holy Spirit.

It goes without saying that Jesus was completely holy and filled with the Spirit. As a human being he was sinless, so there was no impediment within him which would have inhibited the activity of the Spirit. When Jesus was baptised in the waters of the Jordan, the evangelists tell us that he was inundated by the Holy Spirit. But this raises a question. If Jesus was already filled with the Spirit, how could he have had any further need of a new outpouring? We can say with confidence that the Spirit added nothing to his personal holiness, but it did seem to empower him for the evangelisation he was called to engage in. As Jesus testified, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.” Furthermore, at his baptism God the Father, granted Jesus all the gifts of the Spirit which he would need to demonstrate the truth of the Good News he would preach. As he said during his ministry, “even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (Jn 10:38).

It is surprising to notice that Jesus never prayed during his public ministry that anyone would be filled with the Holy Spirit, not even the apostles. The reason for this was the fact that he couldn't do so. It was necessary for him to die on the cross, while surrendering his Spirit back to God, before it could be poured out on Pentecost and ever afterwards. As he said in Jn 16:7, “very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church.

Current emphasis on receiving the fulness of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis on the Life in the Spirit Seminars. Wants everyone to be filled with the Spirit in order to have a deep personal relationship with Jesus and to exercise the gifts of the Spirit.