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Who is the Holy Spirit?

Who is the Holy Spirit? What was the descent of the Holy Spirit like? How does He act in the lives of Christians? What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

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1. What was the descent of the Holy Spirit like?

St. Luke narrates it in chapters 1 and 2 of the Acts of the Apostles. Before

the Ascension, Jesus had commanded the disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. For John indeed baptized with water," he told them, "but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

"A few days later," continues St. Luke, "when they were all together, suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire, resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues."

On this day the Blessed Trinity is fully revealed, and from now on the

Kingdom announced by Christ is open to all who believe in him.

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- St. Luke tells us that after St Peter had spoken and proclaimed Christ's resurrection, many of those present came up to him and asked: "Brethren, what shall we do?" The apostle answered: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And on that day, the sacred text tells us, about three thousand were added to the Church.
- The solemn coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was not an isolated event. There is hardly a page in the Acts of the Apostles where we fail to read about him and the action by which he

guides, directs and enlivens the life and work of the early Christian community. It is he who inspires the preaching of St Peter, who strengthens the faith of the disciples, who confirms with his presence the calling of the gentiles, who sends Saul and Barnabas to the distant lands where they will open new paths for the teaching of Jesus. In a word, his presence and doctrine are everywhere.

(Christ is Passing By, 127)

- A sure way to be humble is to contemplate how, even without talents, fame or fortune, we can be effective instruments if we go to the Holy Spirit so that He may grant us his gifts. The apostles, though they had been taught by Jesus for three years, fled in terror from the enemies of Christ. But after Pentecost they let themselves be flogged and imprisoned, and ended up

giving their lives in witness to their faith. (*Furrow*, 283)

- Ask with me for a new Pentecost, which will once again set the world alight. (*Furrow*, 213)
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2. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. He is God with the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son he receives the same adoration and glory, as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed points out from ancient times. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, he is inseparable from them, both in the intimate life of the Trinity and in his gift of love for the world. But in adoring the life-giving, consubstantial and indivisible Holy

Trinity, the faith of the Church also professes the distinction of the Persons. When the Father sends his Word, he also sends his Breath: a joint mission in which the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. Without a doubt, it is Christ who manifests himself, the visible Image of the invisible God, but it is the Holy Spirit who reveals him. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 687-689)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- Our heart now needs to distinguish and adore each one of the divine Persons. The soul is, as it were, making a discovery in the supernatural life, like a little child opening his eyes to the world about him. The soul spends time lovingly with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and readily submits to the work of the life-

giving Paraclete, who gives himself to us with no merit on our part, bestowing his gifts and the supernatural virtues!

(Friends of God, 306)

- The disciples, witnesses of the glory of the risen Christ, were filled with the strength of the Holy Spirit. Their minds and hearts were opened to a new light. They had followed Christ and accepted his teachings with faith, but they were not always able to fathom the full meaning of his words. The Spirit of truth, who was to teach them all things, had not yet come. They knew that Jesus alone could give them words of eternal life, and they were ready to follow him and to give their lives for him. But they were weak, and in the time of trial, they fled and left him alone.
- On Pentecost all that is a thing of the past. The Holy Spirit, who

is the Spirit of strength, has made them firm, strong, daring. The word of the Apostles resounds forcefully through the streets of Jerusalem. (*Christ is Passing By*, 127)

3. What is the proper name and other titles of the Holy Spirit?

The term "Spirit" translates 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. On the other hand, "Spirit" and "Holy" are divine attributes common to the three divine persons. By joining the two terms, Scripture, liturgy, and theological language designate the

inexpressible person of the Holy Spirit, without any possible equivocation with other uses of the terms "spirit" and "holy."

When he proclaims and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls him the "Paraclete," literally, "he who is called to one's side," *advocatus*. "Paraclete" is commonly translated by "consoler," and Jesus is the first consoler. The Lord also called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth."

Besides the proper name of "Holy Spirit," which is most frequently used in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, we also find in St. Paul the titles: the Spirit of the promise, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of God - and, in St. Peter, the Spirit of glory. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 691-693)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- Get to know the holy Spirit, the great Stranger, on whom depends your sanctification. Don't forget that you are God's temple. The Advocate is in the centre of your soul: listen to him and be docile to his inspirations. (*The Way*, 57)
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4. What symbols of the Holy Spirit are there in Sacred Scripture?

The *water* of Baptism signifies the action of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The *fire* because in the form of tongues "as of fire" the Holy Spirit rested on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and filled them with Him. The spiritual tradition preserves this symbolism of fire as one of the most expressive of the action of the Holy Spirit. The *Dove*

because when Christ comes out of the water of his baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descends and rests on Him. It is the image most often used in art to represent the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 694-701)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- As a bookmark for whatever book he happened to be reading, he always used a strip of paper with this motto written on it in a bold and energetic hand: *Ure igne Sancti Spiritus!* —You could almost say that, rather than writing the words, he had engraved them: Inflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit! O Christian, engraved on your soul and burning on your lips and caught fast in your works, I would like to leave that divine fire. (*The Forge*, 923)

- Interior dryness is not lukewarmness. When a person is lukewarm the waters of grace slide over him without being soaked in. In contrast, there are dry lands which seem arid but which, with a few drops of rain at the right time, yield abundant flowers and delicious fruit. That is why I ask: When are we going to be convinced? How important it is to be docile to the divine calls which come at each moment of the day, because it is precisely there that God is awaiting us! (*The Forge*, 224)
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5. What is the joint mission of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation?

Jesus does not fully reveal the Holy Spirit until after his Resurrection. Little by little he reveals the Spirit in his teaching to the crowd, for instance when he reveals that his Flesh will be food for the life of the world, and talking to Nicodemus, to the Samaritan woman, and to those who participate in the feast of Tabernacles.

To his disciples he speaks of him openly when teaching them how to pray: "If you who are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk 11:13). And when he tells them that they will be called to give testimony, he says: "When you are arrested, do not worry about what you will say or how you will speak. When that time comes, you will be told what you have to say, for it is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of the Father who will speak

for you" (Mt 10:19). (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 689-690)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- This is what Our Lord wants, for we need it if we are to follow him closely. There is no other way. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in each soul — in yours. Be docile and present no obstacles to God, until he makes your poor flesh like that of Jesus on the Cross. (*Furrow*, 978)
- Like the men and women who came up to Peter on Pentecost, we too have been baptized. In baptism, our Father God has taken possession of our lives, has made us share in the life of Christ, and has given us the Holy Spirit. Holy Scripture tells us that God has saved us "through the baptism of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit; whom he has

abundantly poured out upon us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, in order that, justified by his grace, we may be heirs in hope to life everlasting." (*Christ is Passing By*, 128)

6. How does the Holy Spirit act in Christians' lives?

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except through the influence of the Holy Spirit," says St. Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians. And in the Epistle to the Galatians: "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba, Father.'" The knowledge of faith is possible only in the Holy Spirit. To enter into contact with Christ, it is necessary first of all to have been drawn by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, with the Most Blessed Trinity, comes to dwell in the

soul through the sacrament of Baptism. The Holy Spirit with his grace is the first who awakens us to the faith and initiates us into the new life that comes from knowing the one true God and the one who sent him, Jesus Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 737-742))

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- It is worthwhile putting our lives on the line, giving ourselves completely, so as to answer to the love and the confidence that God has placed in us. It is worthwhile, above all, to decide to take our Christian life seriously. When we recite the creed, we state that we believe in God the Father Almighty, in his Son Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life. We affirm that the Church, one,

holy, catholic and apostolic, is the body of Christ, enlivened by the Holy Spirit. We rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and in the hope of the resurrection. But do those words penetrate to the depths of our own heart? Or do they remain only on our lips? The divine message of victory, the joy and the peace of Pentecost, should be the unshakeable foundation for every Christian's way of thinking and acting and living. (*Christ is Passing By*, 129)

- A thought which brings peace to the heart and which the holy Spirit suggests to those who seek the will of God: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. What can worry the soul that sincerely repeats these words? (*The Way*, 760)
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7. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The gifts of the Holy Spirit infused in the Christian's soul bring the virtues to perfection and make the faithful docile to follow with promptness and love, in their daily actions, the divine inspirations. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, intelligence, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1830-1831*)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- The Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity - the sweet guest of the soul - gives his gifts: the gift of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of God. (*Friends of God, 92*)
- Through the gift of piety, the Holy Spirit helps us to realise with certainty that we are children of God. And, being

children of God, how can we be sad? Sadness is the end product of selfishness. If we truly want to live for God, we will never lack cheerfulness, even when we discover our errors and wretchedness. Cheerfulness finds its way into our life of prayer, so much so that we cannot help singing for joy. For we are in love, and singing is a thing that lovers do. (*Friends of God*, 92)

- Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I would say that there is one which we all need in a special way: the gift of wisdom. It makes us know God and rejoice in his presence, thereby placing us in a perspective from which we can judge accurately the situations and events of this life (...) Not that the Christian should neglect to see all that is good in humanity, appreciate its healthy joys or participate in its

enthusiasm and ideals. On the contrary, a true Christian will vibrate in unison with all the good he finds in the world. And he will live in the midst of it with a special concern, since he knows, better than anyone, the depth and the richness of the human spirit. (*Christ is Passing By*, 133)

8. How did the Holy Spirit prepare Mary by his grace? What does it mean that she is "full of grace"?

The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by his grace. It was fitting that the mother of him in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" should herself be "full of grace."

In Mary, the Holy Spirit fulfills the plan of the Father's loving goodness. With and through the Holy Spirit, the

Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. By the Holy Spirit's power and her faith, her virginity became uniquely fruitful.

Finally, through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men, the objects of God's merciful love, into communion with Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 721-726)

Meditate with St. Josemaría

- It is indeed just that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit should crown the Blessed Virgin as Queen and Lady of all created things. You have to make use of her power! With the daring of a child join in this celebration in Heaven. For myself, I crown the Mother of God and my Mother with my purified failings, since I have no precious stones or virtues. Take courage! (*The Forge*, 285)

- Mary becomes transformed in holiness in the depths of her most pure heart on seeing the humility of God: 'the Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; and therefore the Holy One to be born of you shall be called the Son of God'. The Blessed Virgin's humility is a consequence of that unfathomable depth of grace which comes into operation with the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the womb of his ever Immaculate Mother. (*Friends of God*, 96)