

Titles and Symbols of the Holy Spirit

The name used today for the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is “the Holy Spirit.” It replaced the older English translation, “Ghost.” The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruah*, meaning breath, air, wind (see Jn 3:5-8). Jesus called the Holy Spirit the “Paraclete” or “Consoler.” He also referred to him as “the Spirit of truth” (see Jn 16:13). Saint Paul sometimes calls the Holy Spirit “the promise of the Spirit” (Gal 3:14), “a spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15), “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9), and more.

The Church uses many symbols for the Holy Spirit. These include:

Water — the Holy Spirit’s presence in baptism.

Anointing — the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit at his baptism and our anointing in the sacraments of initiation.

Fire — the transformative energy of the Holy Spirit’s presence and actions.

Cloud and Light — the revelations of God in the Old and New Testaments, including the Annunciation, Transfiguration, and more.

Seal — the anointing of Christ and all believers in the sacraments of initiation and the permanent effect of these anointings.

Hand — the reception of the Holy Spirit through the sacramental laying on of hands.

Finger — an image of Holy Spirit as the finger of the Father’s right hand.

Dove — the Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus in the form of a dove after John baptized him and the Holy Spirit who comes upon us at our baptism/confirmation.



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Praying to the Holy Spirit

The Church’s public prayers (Mass, sacraments, and Divine Office) begin and end with, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Reflecting on the words of the liturgy, quietly and prayerfully, is a good way to appreciate the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life.

Praying to the Holy Spirit before making significant decisions and remembering his presence in troubled times enable us to see the bigger picture, one centered on the love of God and one another, as directed toward our eternal salvation.

A Final Word

As children, we learned the significance of the Holy Spirit as a guide and comforter in troubled times. As adults, we realize that the Holy Spirit is central to God’s action of creating and sustaining the universe, revealing God’s will in the Old and New Testaments, in Jesus’ and the Church’s life, in keeping her free from error, in the sacraments, and in the prayers of the Church and of individual Christians.

To accomplish God’s mission of salvation, we need the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit needs us to continue his work on earth. We are the hands and voices of the Father when we reflect the way of life that Jesus taught us and carry out the directives of the Holy Spirit. These help us fulfill our mission on earth and prepare us for eternity.

Let us be true to ourselves and faithful to the prompting of the Holy Spirit!

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The Holy Spirit



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*“I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.”*

— NICENE CREED



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the Trinity, these three Persons are inseparable — equal in one divine nature, yet different as distinct persons. The Nicene Creed says the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the Holy Spirit is “consubstantial [meaning ‘with the same nature or substance’] with the Father and the Son” (689).

The Western (Roman) Catholic tradition says that in the inner life of the Trinity the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son. The Eastern Catholic tradition says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father by indicating that he “comes from the Father *through* the Son (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 2)” (CCC 248). In both traditions, God’s Trinitarian nature is a mystery and would have forever remained unknown to us were it not divinely revealed by God.

The Holy Spirit and Scripture

The Old Testament clearly reveals God as the Father, discloses God the Son in a veiled way, and gives us a glimpse of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the last Divine Person revealed and is revealed by Jesus. He clarifies the developing revelation of the Trinity that occurred through salvation history.



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In the course of salvation history, the Holy Spirit kept the sacred authors free from error. He also guided the Hebrew people along the path of salvation. At the appointed time, he set the stage for Jesus’ coming and the redemption of humankind.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism when the Father made his Son known. First manifested at the Annunciation and confirmed at Jesus’ baptism, the

Holy Spirit was active throughout Jesus’ life.

Before returning to the Father, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the Church. This happened at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the community of believers. He remains with the Church, keeping her free from error. By this same Holy Spirit,

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the Church celebrates Christ’s redemptive death and glorious resurrection at Mass, the sacraments, and other liturgical actions. The Holy Spirit is also at the center of the Catholic community’s prayer life.

We come to better appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit from Scriptures, sacred Tradition, the pope, magisterial teaching, liturgy, prayer, the charisms and ministries of the Church, the signs of missionary life, and the witness of the saints (see CCC 688).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is active with the Father and the Son in creating the world. Creation, God’s “gift of love for the world” (CCC 689), is the work of all three Persons of the Trinity. Divine love brings about our salvation.

Jesus teaches us the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Letter to the Galatians says, “God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (4:6). He lets us know that God the Father is a loving, caring, and compassionate God. The Holy Spirit’s guidance enables us to appreciate our loving Father. Through this knowledge of faith he kindles in us the fire of love. This begins in our baptism and continues throughout life.

Our faith reassures us that through the Holy Spirit the Church will continue to teach, sanctify, and govern the faithful to the end of time. God will never leave us if we profess faith in Jesus as our Lord.

This same Holy Spirit makes Christ known to us (see CCC 687). He does not directly reveal himself, but does so through Jesus’ teachings and his inner promptings in our soul, mind, and heart. Such movements of the Holy Spirit guide us in the way of truth in business dealings, home life, and personal decisions.



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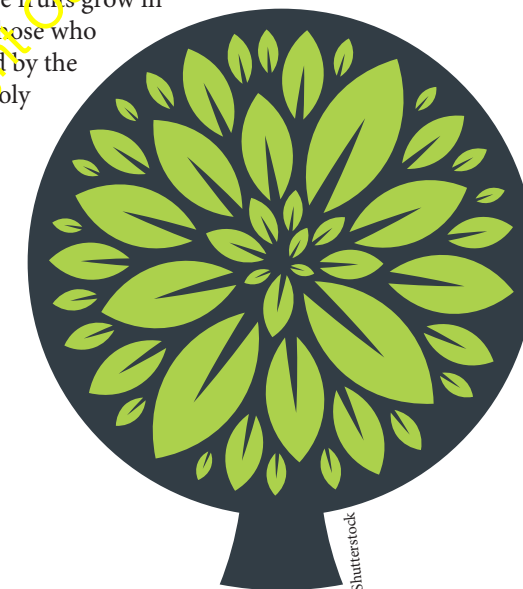


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Blessings of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit exercises a powerful influence on believers. Those open to his promptings receive the “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” They are rooted in Isaiah 11:1-3 and include wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

As we strive to live by these gifts, the Holy Spirit gives us the first glimpse of eternal blessedness in the form of special fruits. Traditionally, these “fruits of the Holy Spirit” are identified as charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (see Gal 5:22-23). Just as fruit grows on a tree, well-nourished by the sun and water, so these fruits grow in the souls of those who are nourished by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



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