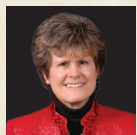




Stained glass window "Dove of the Holy Spirit" in St. Peter's Basilica representing the divine person of the Holy Spirit using the biblical image of a dove.

# The Holy Spirit— God's Divine Life and Power within Us

**At the Last Supper, Jesus took the time to prepare the Apostles for days that laid ahead: the trauma of His Passion and Death, the joy of the Resurrection and His Ascension into heaven. On this night, Our Lord promised the Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "I tell you the solemn truth: It is much better for you that I go. If I do not go, the Holy Spirit will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send Him to you." (Jn 16:7)**



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Who is the Holy Spirit and why did Jesus say that it was essential for us that He come? A brief summary of what God has done for us provides the needed context. With the conscious rejection of God the Father by our first parents through the Original Sin, all of us were estranged from Him. Out of complete love, the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to set us free from sin through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. It would seem that this was enough, but indeed, more was needed! Jesus

ascended to heaven and kept His promise to send the Holy Spirit. This was necessary because in order for us to be brought back into God's family, we needed to receive God the Holy Spirit through baptism.

In the sacrament, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us, and therefore we are called temples of this Holy Spirit. He restores us as adopted sons and daughters of the Father by endowing us with His grace. The grace of the Holy Spirit—God's

divine life within us—remakes us in the likeness of God and gives us the power to live in accordance with this new life in Christ. The baptized person is equipped to live this life by receiving the gifts of faith, hope and charity and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Faith, hope and charity allow us to believe in God, to trust in His promises and to love Him and our neighbor. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which include wisdom, fortitude (courage), knowledge, fear of the Lord, understanding, right counsel and piety, aid us in making decisions in conformity with God's will, which is always for our greatest good.

Jesus also explained at the Last Supper, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth." (Jn 16:13) These words of Jesus are assurance to the Church that God is with us. We have the great gift of Church teaching that we have received from God as recorded in sacred Scripture and gathered in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We can understand and trust this great treasure of teaching, safeguarded by His Church, which helps us to know our dignity as children of God and guides us along the right path to heaven, the way of faith, hope and charity.

Each one of us also receives the guidance of the Holy Spirit, individually. In the powerful sacrament of confirmation, we are given the fullness of the Holy Spirit. By the visible sign of anointing with chrism on the forehead, we receive the invisible reality of the spiritual seal of the Holy Spirit. With this seal, we totally belong to Jesus and we are given "a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the cross." (CCC #1303)

The "special strength of the Holy Spirit" is definitely needed to fulfill

these responsibilities. As in the natural order, we need physical and intellectual strength to grow to maturity and assume the responsibilities of adult life. Moreover, in the supernatural order, we need a spiritual strength to grow to spiritual maturity and assume full responsibilities as members of the Church. This spiritual strength is the grace or power of the Holy Spirit—the supernatural gifts of faith, hope and charity and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. These incredible gifts are strengthened for us when we receive confirmation. Throughout life, whether we feel these gifts or not, as we pray and ask the Holy Spirit for a greater awareness and increase, they will continue to grow and manifest in our daily life.

Prayer is the foundation for knowing and following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially by allowing times of silence in prayer. Silence leads to awareness and recognition of the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit who will guide our actions toward what is true and good for us. We need to allow—give permission to—the Holy Spirit to act within us and through us. We will want to practice following His guidance while allowing His gifts to be operative in our life.

A sign of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives is the evidence of spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Gal 5:22-23) This fruit is a sign that we are growing in our friendship with the Holy Spirit and becoming disciples of Christ and empowered by God. It is God who produces this fruit in us when we are seeking Him and being faithful to Him.

We see this in a dramatic way in the life of a woman named Immaculée Ilibagiza who grew up in Rwanda surrounded by a loving family. Suddenly, her peaceful life

was changed as Rwanda experienced a bloody genocide during a killing rampage that lasted three months. This young woman survived this slaughter as she and seven other women huddled silently together in a hidden 3 x 4-foot bathroom for 91 days while hundreds of machete-wielding killers hunted for them.

Immaculée's father, a devout Catholic, had sent her to a friend's house for protection and gave her a rosary. During the days hiding in the bathroom, anger and resentment began to destroy her. It was then that she turned to praying the rosary to overcome the anger inside her and the evil outside the house. It was this turning towards God, praying for an immense increase of Faith and courage to forgive and away from hate that saved Immaculée.

**“The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which include wisdom, fortitude (courage), knowledge, fear of the Lord, understanding, right counsel and piety, aid us in making decisions in conformity with God's will, which is always for our greatest good.”**

When Immaculée was finally liberated from her hiding place, she weighed 65 pounds and faced the horrific reality that her family had been brutally murdered and nearly 1 million of her extended family, friends, neighbors and fellow Rwandans had been massacred.

After the genocide, Immaculée continued to pray the rosary, begging the Holy Spirit to strengthen in her the gifts of faith and fortitude—courage—which were definitely needed as she came face-to-face with the man who killed her mother and one of her broth-

ers. The Holy Spirit answered her prayers, empowering her to offer the unthinkable, telling the man, "I forgive you."

Each of us needs to deepen our relationship with the Holy Spirit and ask Him to increase the gifts of faith, hope and charity and the seven gifts. God has given us these supernatural gifts because He knows that we need them for difficult times of our lives as well as the ordinary events of everyday life.

Cardinal Mercier, a hero to the world for his defense of Belgium during its sufferings after the German invasion, compiled a meaningful prayer to the Holy Spirit. In teaching about this prayer, he said, "I am going to reveal to you the secret of sanctity and happiness. Every day for five minutes, control your imagination and close your eyes to all the noises of the world in order to enter into yourself. Then, in the sanctuary of your baptized soul (which is the temple of the Holy Spirit), speak to that divine Spirit, saying to Him the prayer: 'O Holy Spirit, Beloved of my soul I adore You. Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to submit to everything that You ask of me and to accept all that You allow to happen to me. Just show me what is Your will, O Holy Spirit.'

"If you do this, your life will flow along happily, serenely and full of consolation, even in the midst of trials. Grace will be proportioned to the trial, giving you the strength to carry it out and you will arrive at the gate of paradise, laden with merit. This submission to the Holy Spirit is the secret of sanctity." You are welcome to download the prayer to the Holy Spirit at this site: [diolc.org/deeper](http://diolc.org/deeper).

Let us thank God for the powerful sacrament of confirmation through which we receive the Holy Spirit and His divine gifts. †