

Ten After Ten Session 36: I Believe in the Holy Spirit

687 The Spirit who “has spoken through the prophets” makes us hear the Father’s Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself. We know him only in the movement by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith. The Spirit of truth who “unveils” Christ to us will not speak on his own. Such properly divine self-effacement explains why “the world cannot receive [him], because it neither sees him nor knows him,” while those who believe in Christ know the Spirit because he dwells with them.

688 The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

in the Scriptures he inspired; in the Tradition, to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses; in the Church’s Magisterium, which he assists; in the sacramental liturgy, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ; in prayer, wherein he intercedes for us; in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up; in the signs of apostolic and missionary life; in the witness of saints through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.

689 The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world.

690 Jesus is Christ, “anointed,” because the Spirit is his anointing, and everything that occurs from the Incarnation on derives from this fullness. When Christ is finally glorified, he can in turn send the Spirit from his place with the Father to those who believe in him...the mission of the Spirit of adoption is to unite them to Christ and make them live in him.

691 “Holy Spirit” is the proper name of the one whom we adore and glorify with the Father and the Son. The Church has received this name from the Lord and professes it in the Baptism of her new children.

692 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,” *ad-vocatus*. “Paraclete” is commonly translated by “consoler,” and Jesus is the first consoler. The Lord also called the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of truth.”

693 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.

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

694 The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit’s action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit.

695 The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the Holy Spirit, to the point of becoming a synonym for the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, anointing is the sacramental sign of Confirmation,

called “chrismation” in the Churches of the East. Its full force can be grasped only in relation to the primary anointing accomplished by the Holy Spirit, that of Jesus.

696 While water signifies birth and the fruitfulness of life given in the Holy Spirit, fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit’s actions... John the Baptist proclaims Christ as the one who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Jesus will say of the Spirit: “I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!” In the form of tongues “as of fire,” the Holy Spirit rests on the disciples on the morning of Pentecost and fills them with himself. The spiritual tradition has retained this symbolism of fire as one of the most expressive images of the Holy Spirit’s actions.

697 Cloud and light. These two images occur together in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In the theophanies of the Old Testament, the cloud, now obscure, now luminous, reveals the living and saving God, while veiling the transcendence of his glory—with Moses on Mount Sinai, at the tent of meeting, and during the wandering in the desert, and with Solomon at the dedication of the Temple.

698 The seal is a symbol close to that of anointing. “The Father has set his seal” on Christ and also seals us in him. Because this seal indicates the indelible effect of the anointing with the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the image of the seal (*sphragis*) has been used in some theological traditions to express the indelible “character” imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments.

699 The hand. Jesus heals the sick and blesses little children by laying hands on them. In his name the apostles will do the same. Even more pointedly, it is by the Apostles’ imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given. The Church has kept this sign of the all-powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in its sacramental *epicleses*.

700 The finger. “It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons.” If God’s law was written on tablets of stone “by the finger of God,” then the “letter from Christ” entrusted to the care of the apostles, is written “with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts.” The hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* invokes the Holy Spirit as the “finger of the Father’s right hand.”

701 The dove. At the end of the flood, whose symbolism refers to Baptism, a dove released by Noah returns with a fresh olive-tree branch in its beak as a sign that the earth was again habitable. When Christ comes up from the water of his baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon him and remains with him. The Spirit comes down and remains in the purified hearts of the baptized... Christian iconography traditionally uses a dove to suggest the Spirit.