

Who the heck is the Holy Spirit?

by TRENTON MATTINGLY

Seriously, who the heck is the Holy Spirit? Most people have an idea about God the Father and God the Son, but not much of one when it comes to their more elusive partner in crime, the third person of the Holy Trinity: **the Holy Spirit.**

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI even said, “The Holy Spirit has been in some ways the neglected person of the Blessed Trinity.” *Think about it:* When was the last time you thought of the Holy Spirit as something other than just a flaming dove who happens to show up from time – to - time in the Bible? If this is true for you, you should definitely keep reading to find out all the incredible things you’ve been missing out on!

First things first, as with the Trinity, know that **no one can ever fully comprehend the Holy Spirit.** Like many things in the Catholic faith, it has an element of **mystery** to it. I don’t mean the type of mystery where you shrug your shoulders and say, “Hmm, I don’t know.” I mean the type that is definitely understandable, but because of the infinite nature of God, we can’t understand all of it.

After all, if it was possible to fit the entirety of God (or even just one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity) into our little brains, our God wouldn’t be very impressive, would He? This is kind of like being blinded by light. You can know there is a sun, but if there is too much sunlight all at once, you’ll find yourself unable to see much at all. Knowing that we can’t ever fully take it all in should never stop us from trying to see what we can though. God has made our limited minds capable of understanding pieces of His infinite complexity for a reason, and trying our best to discover why can only make us more amazed and in love with Him.

Like Steps in a Dance

The Holy Spirit **is love**, to put things very simply. I know this answer is cliché and isn’t what you were hoping for, so don’t fret — there’s more. The Holy Spirit **is a distinct person of the Holy Trinity**, who exists as the communication and personification of the mutual, flowing, and never-ending relationship of love and unity between God the Father and God the Son. This is what the Nicene Creed (the one we say at Mass every Sunday) means when it says the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” This is super cool, but also tempting to think the Holy Spirit is just love between the Father and Son. Don’t forget that the Holy Spirit is a distinct member of the Holy Trinity who **has existed for all of eternity** and plays a big role in the creation of the universe (**Genesis 1:2**) and bringing about our salvation through Jesus Christ (**Matthew 1:18**).

Many great theologians and saints throughout history, like St. Maximus the Confessor, have realized how difficult it can be to understanding all of this and managed to come up with an easier way to think of things. They compared the bond between the members of the Holy Trinity to a never-ending dance where the Father and Son are the dancers and the Holy Spirit is the structure of the dance they are following. In other words, the Holy Trinity would easily win Dancing with the Stars. After all, the Trinity has the whole perfection thing going on and has had all of eternity to practice.

Self-Gift

The coolest part about all of this is that the Holy Spirit constantly invites us and encourages us to take part in this dance. Think about Jesus’ baptism in **Matthew 3:13-17**. The clouds in the sky open up, the Holy Spirit rockets down to descend upon Jesus, and a voice booms, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” When we are baptized, the heavens may not open up and God may not announce our identity, but the Holy Spirit does descend upon us and make a home inside our souls, and **is well pleased with us**. Think about how incredible of a gift this is: The creator of the entire universe and everything in it has **made a home inside of you**. He has made a gift of Himself. Jesus promised us no less in **John 14:20**. And if the Holy Spirit is inside of us, and if the Holy Spirit is part of the flowing relationship of the Trinity, we suddenly find ourselves swept up in the greatest dance of all time!

This love, if we are willing to accept it, **slowly changes and transforms our mind and soul** to be **more aware** and **accepting of the incredible love of God**. As Pope Benedict XVI once advised, "Let us invoke the Holy Spirit: he is the artisan of God's works. Let his gifts shape you!"

Teacher of the Soul and Protector of Truth

Have you ever had a teacher who made a huge difference in your life? The way they taught things just made sense, they were creative in ways you never thought possible, and the advice they gave you, even outside of school work, turned out to be the best advice every time. And, maybe, you still find yourself wanting to ask that teacher for help even when you aren't in their class anymore. In **John 14:26**, Jesus tells us that this is exactly what the Holy Spirit is like. He expands our soul and our mind to be open to God's graces and guides us in our lives as Christians.

And **as a teacher**, the Holy Spirit would never lead anyone away from the truth. In fact, take a moment to read **Acts 2**. The Holy Spirit descended upon the first bishops of the Catholic Church (Jesus' apostles) at Pentecost and, ever since, has guided and protected the members and leaders of the Church from straying too far from the teachings of Jesus Christ. It also served as an inspiration to spread this truth to as many people as possible. This guidance and inspiration have remained with the Church ever since by being passed on from bishop to bishop through the Holy Spirit.

LESSON 2 QUESTIONS

List at least 4 things from this reading that we do know about the Holy Spirit?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Fill in the blanks:

1. The Holy Spirit will slowly _____ and _____ our _____ and _____ to be more _____ and _____ of the incredible _____ of God.
2. The Holy Spirit has made a home inside our _____ and is well _____ with _____.

True or False:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Everyone should fully comprehend the Holy Spirit before confirmation. | T | F |
| 2. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. | T | F |
| 3. The Holy Spirit has been known to lead people to a dishonest life. | T | F |
| 4. True teachings of the Holy Spirit can not be found in the bible. | T | F |
| 5. The Holy Spirit wants you to invite him into your life and use his gifts. | T | F |

BONUS

What are the 8 symbols of the Holy Spirit?

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ | 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ | 7. _____ | 8. _____ |

INSTRUCTIONS:

Highlight the parts of this prayer that mean the most to you. **Underline** any part you have questions about. **Circle** the words that give you hope.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.



What do you think the words “and they shall be created” mean in this prayer?

In this prayer, it mentions that the Holy Spirit is a teacher. What do you think you can learn from him and how is it possible to learn?

Why do you think this prayer begins with the words, “Come Holy Spirit?”

Some symbols of the Holy Spirit used in this prayer are Fire and Light. What are qualities of Fire and Light that best symbolize what the Holy Spirit can do?

Dove



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- _____, _____ and _____
- Symbol of _____, _____ and _____
- Messenger reminding us to evolve and grow and follow the compass of God

Biblical basis:

- At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove
- For Noah, the dove was used as a sign of life after the flood helping bring him and his family to land

Flame



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- Full of _____ (fires us up to do God's work)
- All _____ (gives us passion that will last a lifetime)
- Burns away _____

Biblical basis:

- At Pentecost, tongues of fire rested on each Apostle
- Moses experienced the power of God in the burning bush

Wind



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- Moving air that is _____ and _____
- Its presence is known by its _____ which can like a whisper or strong like a hurricane
- Not only _____ but also _____ and not subject to _____

Biblical basis:

At Pentecost, a strong driving wind filled the entire house as the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit

Oil



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- _____, _____ and _____ us
- _____ and _____ us (with the gifts of the Holy Spirit)
- Gives us _____ to resist _____

Biblical basis:

- Anointing with oil was a call to the Spirit's action in doing good and providing healing power in both the Old and New Testament

Water



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- _____
- _____ us and _____ us
- Quenches our thirst and makes us _____

Biblical basis:

- Water was precious commodity in Biblical time
- The baptism of Jesus took place in water
- Jesus said he would give life-giving water to those who believe

Cloud



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- _____ and _____
- _____ presence in the sky
- Bringer of rain and _____

Biblical basis:

- In the Old Testament, God often lead the Israelites through the wilderness by a cloud and appeared to them in a cloud
- At Jesus' transfiguration, the Holy Spirit manifested inself in the form of a cloud.

Light



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- _____ and _____ us
- Gives _____ to the _____
- _____ our path

Biblical basis:

- At the Annunciation when the Holy Spirit came to Mary, she was "overshadowed" with its power
- In both the Old Testament and New Testament, God's word is found in the light and lamps.

Hand/Finger



Why it represents the Holy Spirit:

- Laying of hands Invokes _____ and _____
- _____ and _____ to a Believer (to "charge" them to do God's work)
- Universal symbol of _____

Biblical basis:

- Jesus heals the sick and blesses children by laying of his hands
- Apostles carry on his work by imposition of hands
- The 10 Commandment tablets given Moses were inscribed by God's own finger