**Part 1: The Spirit of God Accompanies us in our Spiritual Journey**

**Which person of the Blessed Trinity do you have the most affinity for? Which do you pray to most often? Perhaps you don’t always differentiate between the persons of the Trinity in your prayer.**

**I have heard many people, including scholars, say that the Holy Spirit is the least pondered of the persons of the Trinity, the least studied and expounded upon. Even Pope Benedict affirmed this perception.**

**Yet, the Holy Spirit is the most “personal” of the Trinity. He is the most available and the most direct.**

**It is important for us to remember that the Holy Spirit is a “who” not a “what.” In our minds we can more readily imagine a picture of the Father and/or the Son, but the Spirit is more nondescript. Yet we say that there are three “persons” in the Blessed Trinity.**

**Thus, the Holy Spirit is a**[**Person,**](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11726a.htm)**really distinct as such from the Father and the Son; Of course, He is**[**God**](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm)**and of the same substance as the Father and the Son. A mystery we will never fully understand this side of heaven.**

**Many texts of Scripture declare quite clearly the personhood of the Holy Spirit, distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet**[**One God**](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm)**with Them. In several places**[**St. Paul**](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm)**speaks of the Spirit as if referring to**[**God**](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm)**.  Throughout Scripture, the Spirit speaks, sends, calls, and acts, all characteristics of personhood.**

**When we say person, however, we must let go of our human concept of personhood. He is very commonly envisioned as “breath” as our Lord breathed forth the Spirit on the apostles on the night of the Resurrection. Truly, the Holy Spirit is the love shared by the Father and the Son. Think of it this way: The Father and the Son love each other infinitely; it is the Holy Spirit who connects them in this bond of infinite love. He is the chain of love between them.**

**Unlike in the case of the Father and the Son where our minds can create an image, however limited it might be, with the Holy Spirit perhaps it is best to focus on our sense of hearing. We can hear the Holy Spirit in the stillness of our hearts. In Romans 10 and Galatians 13 St. Paul affirms this. We will address the voice of the Spirit in more detail in a few moments but suffice it to say for now that the image of Divine breath entering and transforming our souls is a very effective image of the Holy Spirit, but not the only one.**

**From the moment of our baptism the Holy Spirit truly dwells within us. As we become God’s children through this first sacrament the Holy Spirit fills us up, completes us and prays within us.**

**Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, “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.**

**Personal: baptism/confirmation.**

**From the moment of our baptism, the Spirit accompanies us on our spiritual journey.**

**We possess God because He gives Himself to us, but the first gift is the Holy Spirit.**

**John 14:16-17**

**16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+14%3A16-17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26686a)**] in you.**

**Another classical and beautiful image of the Holy Spirit is the artist of souls. Our sanctity, our holiness is His supreme art. He is able to mold our spirit with unique proportions and shapes. He desires to form us into the ideal beauty which is Jesus.**

**One of our retreats focused totally on holiness, but of course this topic comes up consistently because that is our goal in life. There are many divisions in our world today, but the most crucial division in terms of eternal life is that between those who seek holiness as their ultimate goal and those who are focused on the aggrandizement of the ego.**

**It is important to remember that holiness is not the work of human beings alone or in its origin. In our program of perfection, spiritual perfection, we must work with courage and patience on our part, but the Holy Spirit is the Retreat Director of our lifelong retreat. He is the Retreat Director of our 40 day Lenten retreat. Hoiness is beyond our power; it is the fruit of God’s grace. But we must cooperate in this journey of love and transformation.**

**The Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son is within us. It is as if the Father and the Son are speaking about us, loving us.**

**As we seek to grow in the Spirit, it is so important that we don’t put up resistance. We must open our hearts and souls as fully as we are able. As we admit our weaknesses, we place all our trust and hope in God alone.**

**The Spirit accompanies us on our own individual journey; we have a unique spiritual program for holiness known only to God, but we journey with others because like the Trinity exists eternally as a community of persons, we were created for community.**

**Part 2: The Spirit is our guide and the voice of truth and love that speaks to our hearts.**

**As was mentioned earlier, we often speak of the voice of the Holy Spirit…..that still small voice in our heart. It is through the movements of hearts that the Spirit guides us in our pursuit of God’s will and of holiness.**

**If we are vigilant, we will learn to identify invitations from the Holy Spirit. We will develop a “spiritual sense.” This develops through experience and through our faithful resolution to follow the Lord’s guidance.**

**The Holy Spirit uses a “tone of voice” that is His alone and we will come to recognize it as he progressively shares the spiritual sense with us. We remember the quote in the Gospel of St. John, 10:27. My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, and they follow me.**

**When we find out what he is asking, he will give us the strength to do it.**

**But we cannot receive the grace of the Holy Spirit if we are rigidly attached to our ideas and our points of view. We certainly can affirm and believe that which is upright, but our lives should still be governed by an attitude of detachment: freedom, distance, openness to the will of God.**

**Jean LaFrance reminds us that our wisdom and God’s practicality never coincide perfectly; we always require detachment.**

**Inner reserve. In this openness if our personal plans are taken away, there is no drama.**

**To hear the voice of the Holy Spirit we must sit in silence and in peace. Agitation we allow in our hearts will prevent our ability to hear Him.**

**The greatest harm that upsetting ourselves does to us is that it makes us incapable of following the impulses of the Holy Spirit.**

**It is important to remember that silence is not emptiness but turning inward...inwardness.**

**Personal silent prayer is indispensable to recognizing the “movements” of our hearts.**

**It is so easy for the movement of grace to be lost in “background noise.”**

**Inner calm.....**

**Jean LaFrance also says that the whole spiritual life could be summed up as taking note of the ways and movements of the holy Spirit in our souls and strengthening our wills in the resolution to follow them.**

**The Spirit can impart in seconds or minutes what it would take a lifetime to learn on our own.**

**The voice of the Spirit is constant vs. unstable and changing.**

**Our moods and wishes are often marked by inconstancy.**

**We must give time to confirm the voice of the Holy Spirit and we must also recognize that we will make mistakes as we listen to what we believe He is saying. The spiritual life is a process of growth that is not always linear.**

**It is important to remember as we seek to follow the guidance of the H.S. that God’s will requires the choice will the maximum of love, not necessarily the maximum of suffering. God’s will is not always the most difficult choice.**

**In addition to guiding us on the path to holiness, the voice of the Holy Spirit guides us to truth.**

**God will never contradict himself, thus we can always trust that Scripture and Tradition will always be a guidepost in discerning the voice of the Spirit as He guides us to truth.**

**He speaks to us through the happenings of our lives.**

**The events of life are the surest expression of God’s will.**

**Providential will vs. Permissive will.**

**It is said that the difference in becoming a saint is the difference we have in consenting freely to everything that happens to us.**

**St. Therese of Lisieux: Consent to all! Don’t just endure. “I decide to choose what I have not chosen.”**

**The Holy Spirit guides us to the fulness of truth and spiritual perfection not so much by our external conformity to an ideal as by inner faithfulness to God’s inspirations.**

**Thus our external world and our internal world are intimately connected. We must desire and pray for these inspirations of grace. When we are faithful to grace it attracts new graces. “To everyone who has, more will be given”**

**St. Thomas Aquinas our most prolific theologian in the history of the church stopped writing about God dead in his tracks when he had a single, genuine experience of God. --- everything He had ever thought or written about God was like so much straw..... THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING ABOUT GOD AND KNOWING GOD.**

**Part 3: The Gifts of the Spirit**

**The ideal of the Holy Spirit Himself and specifically of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to reproduce Jesus in us. The soul is like marble and the Spirit is the chisel. Each of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in its own way orders us to become like Christ. The gifts of the Spirit can be considered character traits that Jesus alone possesses in their fulness. The Spirit freely shares them with us so that we can grow in spiritual perfection and become Jesus’ witnesses to the world.**

**Again, it is important that we are open to the process with our hearts and souls. The Holy Spirit begins his divine activity in the work of transforming us but our desire to grow and be transformed is essential to the fruitfulness of the process.**

These gifts or traits are infused into us at our baptism, and sealed in the sacrament of confirmation. (comment) They are also known as the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit, because they serve the purpose of rendering us open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our lives, helping us to grow in holiness and making us fit for heaven. The sacrament of Confirmation increases the gifts of the Spirit within us.

St. Thomas Aquinas describes them as supernatural helps to us in the process of our “perfection.” They enable us to transcend the limitations of human reason and human nature and participate in the very life of God, as Christ promised (John 14:23).

**3Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”**

**One could also think of the seven gifts as divine receivers for picking His inspirations. Just as one who does not possess a radio cannot hear sounds from the other side of the earth, so one who is without the gifts of the Holy Spirit will not be able to pick up divine inspirations. God have willed to put them in our souls so that we may be able to “make contact” with the Paraclete.**

**Yet it is not just about perceiving the Spirit, but His movements enable us to accomplish the best and most perfect tasks and acts of love. The gifts of the Spirit enable us to receive his divine message, but also the impulse under his influence to move ourselves to become our spiritual best.**

**For whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

**If the Holy Spirit moves us, and our acts are performed under His influence, those acts have a truly divine character.**

**What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are, according to Catholic Tradition, **wisdom**, **understanding**, **counsel**, **fortitude**, **knowledge**, **piety**, and **fear of the Lord**.

Four of these gifts –Understanding, Wisdom, Knowledge, Counsel – are for the perfection of the intellect. Three of the gifts are directed toward the perfection of the will: Fortitude, Piety, and Fear of the Lord.

The Spirit is like a wind that blows where it will as in John 3:8:

**8The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”**

**We can hear the sound of it but know nothing of the way it came or the way it goes: but by the Gifts of the Spirit we can go with it.**

* **Wisdom** is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs according to divine truth. Wisdom makes the soul responsive to the true, the spiritual value of things in terms of God Himself.
* **Knowledge** is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice. Knowledge makes the sould responsive to the true, spiritual value of things in terms of the created world.
* **Understanding** is penetrating insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation—in effect, the ability to “see” God We come to an understanding of the truths of salvation and a power to explore them more deeply.
* **Counsel** allows a man to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation. Council makes the mind responsive to God’s guidance in relation to the here-and-now problems that face us.
* **Fortitude** denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles, even deadly ones, by virtue of the assurance of everlasting life
* **Piety** is, principally, revering God with filial affection, paying worship and duty to God, paying due duty to all men on account of their relationship to God, and honoring the saints and not contradicting Scripture. The Latin word *pietas*denotes the reverence that we give to our father and to our country; since God is the Father of all, the worship of God is also called piety
* **Fear of God** is, in this context, “filial” or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him—as opposed to “servile” fear, whereby we fear punishment

**The first—and only—place in the entire Bible where these seven special qualities are listed together is Isaiah 11:1–3, in a famous Messianic prophecy:**

**There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.**

**It is important to remember that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are unique skills and abilities given by the Holy Spirit to faithful followers of Christ t*o serve God for the common benefit of his people,* the church. They are not for our personal benefit alone.**

**The gifts of the Spirit are simply God empowering faithful Christians to do what He has called us to do.** [**2 Peter 1:3**](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=2+peter+1:3) **says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." The gifts of the Holy Spirit are part of "everything we need" to accomplish His plans for our lives.**

**Part 4: The Fruits of the Holy Spirit**

**The H.S. frees us, detaches us from the things of earth and breaks our chains regards the ego.**

**When the heart is free of affection for earthly things, heavenly love freely enters.**

**Grace is so essential and beautiful because it makes us resemble God.**

**When our first parents were in paradise everything was in harmony, completely subjected to God. When sin appeared the harmony was broken, we possessed a damaged nature, a nature in constant combat.**

**The work of grace in the Spirit is to re-establish something of the concord of paradise, to order our heart and to place our whole being under the dominion of God.**

**It is slow work, but when we are vigilant, the results are pleasing to the soul but most of all to God.**

**A tree is known by its fruit. Strengthened by experience our results will show if from God or if from our minds alone. St. Paul gives us 9 fruits of the Spirit and 3 more are traditionally added: charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, mildness, faith, modesty, self-control, chastity and long-suffering.**

**These fruits according to St. Thomas are a principle of unity; order. They result in an order of our whole being. They suppose maturity and perfection----thus order.**

**Gifts to be used to bear fruit. All who are confirmed are**[**equipped with the gifts of the Holy Spirit**](https://thecatholicspirit.com/faith/focus-on-faith/faith-fundamentals/the-power-of-the-holy-spirit-at-confirmation/)**to live a virtuous and holy life, and sent forth to bear much fruit, something that is possible only when one stays firmly attached to Jesus, the vine (see John 15:1-8).  The graces of the Spirit strengthen confirmed Christians to carry out their vocations for the good of others and the benefit of the Church and the world.**

**The difference between gifts and fruits.**

**How do you know that you are living in the Spirit? We will be known by our fruits. St. Paul in Galatians 5 tells us:**

6**So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+5&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29180c)**] you want.**

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.**

**Joy is a flag of the Holy Spirit. Peace is signaled by joy. Both of these reflect a connection at the very depth of our soul to God.**

**But we are called not to remain in a personal “me and God” relationship. True joy and peace will result when we are living the life of love that the Spirit calls us to. All of the fruits bear witness to His presence showing forth through our actions and free gift of self for others.**

**Part 5: Holy Spirit as Advocate**

**We see most explicitly the role of the Holy Spirit as Advocate in the quote from John 14:16-17:**

**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth.**

**The word “Advocate” in Greek is *Parakleton.* It can be translated as counselor, comforter, helper or advocate. As an Advocate the Spirit speaks “on our behalf and offers us guidance.”**

***When going to the Father he said: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). It follows that the apostles and the Church must continually find, by means of the Holy Spirit, that presence of the Word-Son which, during his earthly mission, was physical and visible in his incarnate humanity, but which, after his ascension to the Father, is completely immersed in mystery. The Holy Spirit's presence which, as Jesus said, is interior to souls and to the Church ("He dwells with you, and will be in you": Jn 14:17), will make the invisible Christ present in a lasting manner "until the end of the world." The transcendent unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit will ensure that Christ's humanity, assumed by the Word, will be present at work wherever the trinitarian plan of salvation is being put into effect through the power of the Father.***

**Satan is the accuser, the adversary, the “one who opposes.” He is the prosecuting attorney who hopes not only to present us as guilty before the Father, but to inspire the acts for which we are guilty. In the book of Job, we see Satan acting very effectively and explicitly as the prosecutor before God.**

**St. Paul illustrates this role of advocate for us in Romans 8:16:**

**16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**

**In baptism we are sealed with the indelible mark of Christ, signaling that we belong to God.**

**Through His continuous work in our lives, He testifies and bears witness before the Father that we are indeed His.**

**He is our defense from the accusations of Satan and as such He is indeed our parakletos.**

**Acts 15:28:**

**For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:** [**29**](https://biblehub.com/acts/15-29.htm)

**that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from *acts of* sexual immorality;** [**[t]**](https://biblehub.com/nasb_/acts/15.htm#fn)**if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”**

**The key phrase written by the apostles—in reflecting here on the power and work of the Paraclete—is this: “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and us…” There was no conflict between the apostles and the Holy Spirit, for they had been given the Paraclete in order to teach, to lead, to guide, and, when necessary, decide.**

***"They will deliver you up to councils...you will be dragged before governors and kings.... When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say...for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:17-20; likewise Mk 13:11; Lk 12:12 says: "for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour what you ought to say").***

**When we witness the role of the H.S. in the early church in the lives of the Apostles and we ponder his role in our lives another beautiful image is of a perfectly tuned lyre. When our generosity and openness to the will of God meets the perfect and infinite generosity of his divinity, we experience a spiritual synchronicity that is a foretaste of heaven.**

**As we reflect on the person and the nature of the Holy Spirit, it is essential to remember that while one of the persons of the Trinity may take the lead at a given manifestation of the divine will, they are always working in tandem.**

**Per St. Thomas Aquinas, there are three stages of divine love: The soul is possessed by the Holy Spirit, transformed into the Word made flesh and rests in the bosom of the Heavenly Father.**

**As the Holy Spirit transforms us into the beautiful image of Jesus, let us be passionate to accomplish the will of the Father.**

***St. Faustina:***

***God is very generous and does not refuse His grace to anyone. he gives even more than we ask for. The shortest road to holiness is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.***

***May we allow Him to be our inspiration and embrace Him as our Retreat Master on our 40 day Lenten retreat, individually and as a community of faith.***