

Gift of the Holy Spirit: *Confirmation*



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Why the Knights of Columbus Advertise Catholic Faith

The reason is simple. We Catholics want our non-Catholic friends and neighbors to know us as we really are and not as we are some times mistakenly represented.

We are confident that when our religious Faith is better understood by those who do not share it, mutual understanding will promote the good-will which is so necessary in a predominantly Christian country whose government is designed to serve all the people—no matter how much their religious convictions may differ.

American Catholics are convinced that as the teachings of Christ widely and firmly take hold of the hearts and conduct of our people, we shall remain free in the sense that Christ promised (John VIII, 31-38), and in the manner planned by the Founding Fathers of this republic.

Despite the plainly stated will of the Good Shepherd that there be "one fold and one shepherd," the differences in the understanding of Christ's teaching are plainly evident. It has rightfully been called "the scandal of a divided Christianity."

If there is anything which will gather together the scattered flock of Christ, it is the nationwide understanding of the Savior, what He did and how He intended mankind to benefit by the Redemption.

To this end, we wish our fellow-Americans to become acquainted with the teachings of Christ as the Catholic Church has faithfully presented them, since the day the apostles invaded the nations of the world in willing and courageous obedience to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matt. XXVIII, 19).

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THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE GOSPELS

Columbus set sail for America in three boats. The flagship was the Santa Maria—the Saint Mary—called after her whom the Gospel of St. John (2:3) names “the mother of Jesus.”

The Santa Maria opened up the New World. So did Mary, the mother of Jesus, open a new world. Except for China and Japan, the major countries of the globe date their calendars and mark their time according to that year of the Lord when Christ was born.

The new time began when Augustus was Caesar (Luke 2:1) and the way in which it came to pass is thus described in ten short verses in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, verses 26 to 35 inclusive.

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And when the angel had come to her, he said, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.’ When she had heard him she was troubled at his word, and kept pondering what



manner of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and

the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he shall be king over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ But Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this happen, since I do not know man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God.’”

“The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee” ... this is the decisive date for mankind, the daybreak of Christianity. The method is that of “overshadowing,” that is how the Holy Spirit will work the mystery of the coming of Christ. Son of God, Son of Man, Christ is born, St. Paul reminds us, of a woman yet without a father according to the flesh.

The "why" of it is summed up in these matchless words of John the Evangelist: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John 3:16).

The first lesson the Gospel teaches about the Holy Spirit is that He is God's love. Father and Son love the world in the Holy Spirit.

The overshadowment recalls the days of the wanderings of the Jewish people in the wilderness after they had fled from Egypt and were in search of the Promised Land. Moses, their leader, had entrusted to his charge the Tabernacle of God—a square box of setim wood that God had commanded to be made, so that, within the Tabernacle, He might abide with His people. During the day a cloud covered God's dwelling with its shadow.

Divine Inspirer

Now God has come anew. The tabernacle in which He dwells is Mary whom the Holy Spirit has overshadowed.

This is not the first introduction of the Holy Spirit in the pages of the Gospel of St. Luke.

Yet another angelic visitation is described to the father of John the Baptist, Zachary, a member of the Levites, the priests of the Lord, (Luke 1:11-15). "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right of the altar of incense. And Zachary, seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to

him, 'Do not be afraid, Zachary, for thy petition has been heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great before the Lord; he shall drink no wine or strong drink, and shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.'

"He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit." He was the very last of the Old Testament prophets—"the law and the prophets were until John," said Christ (Luke 16:16).

When his message began, going before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, John the Baptist appears as one without a home, living off the land on locusts and honey, clothed in camel hair and totally consumed by the transcending power of his message. The only way in which he could be silenced in the end, was when King Herod cut off his head.

Just as the Holy Spirit prepared the way for the Incarnation, so now through the Baptist He prepares the way for the public ministry of Christ. John baptizes, but only with water. It is Christ alone Who can give the Holy Spirit—"Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit," Christ tells Nicodemus, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

But though John cannot give the Holy Spirit, his works are stamped with the Holy Spirit. He prophesies. He urges repentance. Above all, fortitude flames in John. He lived and died totally and completely without any fear of man.

So the Holy Spirit is not only God's love. He is the Divine Inspirer. The Spirit of God speaks through the prophets. But He positively thunders through the tongue of John—"you brood of vipers who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Lüke 3:7).

Holy Trinity

The next mention of the Holy Spirit throws more light on His Personality. It is only by degrees that the Gospels reveal Him in His full stature.

The mention is in Luke's Gospel on the occasion of the meeting between the Baptist and Christ. This encounter leads to one of the most majestic revelations ever made by God to man about the Divine Life.

Christ goes to the Jordan to receive the baptism of John. All four Gospel writers, i.e. evangelists, agree that this event begins the public ministry of Christ.

There would be nothing to distinguish Christ from other men crowding round the Baptist to hear his message. He is neither priest, nor Levite, just a plain Jew, wearing a linen tunic with long sleeves, a woolen cloak with tassels, one of the crowd.

Yet when He asks for baptism it is John who says "I have need to be baptized of thee," and Christ answers "Suffer it to be so now" (Matthew 3:14-15).

John baptized Jesus and these are his words in testimony of what happened: "I saw the Spirit coming down as a dove from heaven, and he remained upon him. And I knew him not; but he who sent

me to baptize with water, said to me: 'He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit.' And I saw, and I gave testimony, that this is the Son of God" (John 1:32-34).

God Himself had promised the Baptist this revelation. It crowns the whole ministry of the prophet. At the same time it was a Divine warrant on the vocation of Christ. Still more, it was the first manifestation of the Holy Trinity to the world.

With the descent of the Spirit upon Christ came a voice from heaven—"Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Lüke 3:22).

Much later this manifestation of the Three Persons in one God, the Trinity, would be affirmed by Christ in the baptismal formula He taught His disciples: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

Relation to the Father and Son

The Baptism of Jesus merits more meditation for the light it casts on the Holy Spirit. As Matthew describes the Baptism, the Holy Spirit is not a spirit but "*the* Spirit of God" (Matthew 3:16). St. Mark calls Him "*the* Spirit" (Mark 1:10); St. Luke "*the* Holy Spirit" (Lüke 3:22).

What is more, John the Evangelist breaks the rules of grammar just to emphasize this point. He wrote his Gospel in Greek and he has the words "The Spirit" rendered

by two Greek words TO PNEUMA. According to grammatical usage the pronoun should have the same gender as the noun it stands for, and the gender of PNEUMA is *neuter*. John, however, makes his pronoun *masculine* to emphasize the personal character of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is a distinct person. In the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "The Holy Ghost is a Power most mighty, a Being divine and unsearchable; for He is living and intelligent, a sanctifying principle of all things made by God through Christ... There is one God the Father... and one Lord, Jesus Christ... and one Holy Ghost, Who through the prophets preached of Christ, and when Christ was come, descended, and manifested Him" (Catechetical Discourses, 16, 3).

The accounts of the Baptism give the Holy Spirit His own separate manifestation. He appears as a Dove. The Father is heard as a voice. The Son is seen as a man. It is the Dove Who brings together the Father and the Son.

Three Persons

In this text, then, we have set before us the reality of the distinction between the three subsisting individuals, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Here all possibility of confusing the persons is removed. We see that there are three divine persons.

The one God of Christianity has the same essence as the one God of Judaism. But the one God of Christianity exists in Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy

Spirit.

At the beginning of the public ministry of Christ this fact is revealed. At its end this fact is re-emphasized... "Go, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

To His contemporaries Christ was defined as the son of His parents. They could not know then of the miraculous manner of His conception by the power of the Holy Spirit. "Is not this," they asked, "the son of Joseph?" (Luke 4:22).

Through Mary, Christ possessed a human nature so like ours that His contemporaries could not think of Him as God. But when Christ defines Himself, it is not only as Son of Man, as all of us are sons of men; in addition, it is as Son of God. On oath before the High Priest at the time of His trial He is asked: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "Thou hast said it" (Matthew 26:63-64). Their response shows how He was understood. "What further need have we of witnesses?" To them it was blasphemy.

When Christ defines Himself as a person, it is always with reference to His Heavenly Father. 'All things are entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son but the Father; neither does any one know the Father, but the Son and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him' (Luke 10:22).

Throughout the whole long

Christian tradition these words Father and Son have retained their absolute value. Their relationship to each other has always been understood as inaccessible to unaided human reason.

Throughout the rest of the public ministry Christ will come back again and again to this fact. It is the punch-line of the Gospels, and on this point that He was what He said He was—the well-beloved Son—He died on Golgotha. And to prove His point He rose from the dead.

Here is the heart of Christianity and the whole meaning of the Gospels. "This has been written," cries John, "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing this, you might have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Father and Son are each defined by their relationship to each other. As soon as Christ affirms "I am the Son of God," the words can bear no meaning whatsoever unless God is His Father. What defines the Holy Spirit?

He is defined as the lovingness between Father and Son. For us lovingness is something between lovers; in God it is Somebody. This is a mystery and cannot be explained; here it is simply being defined.

A mystery of religion is a truth which we cannot fully understand, but which we firmly believe because we have God's word for it. There are certain mysteries hidden in God which we cannot know without divine revelation, but which we must believe because God has revealed them.

In God, infinite and without shadow of matter, the Spirit is the uniting love of Father and Son. The lovingness between devoted husband and wife is certainly something, but not somebody. When the love of parents is expressed to the extent of their producing a child who loves them and who is loved in return, we see a faint little echo of the family of God.

Matters become a little easier when we seek to recognize the Persons of the Blessed Trinity not so much in their mysterious relations to each other but in their very clear relations to ourselves. Here again the Gospel must be our teacher.

Family of God

These are the most explicit passages in the entire New Testament on the relation of the Holy Spirit to Father and Son: (John 14:15-19) "If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you shall know him, because he will dwell with you, and be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world no longer sees me. But you see me, for I live and you shall live."

John 14:25-26, "These things I have spoken to you while yet dwelling with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you."

John 15:26, "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me."

John 16:7-15, "But I speak the truth to you; it is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he has come he will convict the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of justice, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; and of judgment, because the prince of this world has already been judged. Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will teach you all the truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he will hear he will speak, and the things that are to come he will declare to you. He will glorify me, because he will receive of what is mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are mine. That is why I have said that he will receive of what is mine, and will declare it to you."

From these passages we can conclude that the Holy Spirit personally bears witness concerning the Son, glorifies Him, teaches all truth, and dwells with the Apostles and their successors forever. Christ must depart and ask the Father so that the Advocate may come. The Advocate cannot come without the Son, as the Son cannot come without the Father. "If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will

love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

See the love of this most Holy Trinity! "I will not leave you *orphans*," says the Beloved Son. "My Father will *love* him who keeps my word," says the Son again. And, finally, "The Father will send the Holy Spirit in my name."

In all things the three Divine Persons are equal; yet they are really distinct from one another. Each is God, each infinitely perfect. Yet the Son comes from the Father and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. If we think only of the relationship between them, we can say of each Person what we cannot say of either of the other two. Thus we can say of the Father: "He has begotten the Son"; of the Son: "He is begotten of the Father"; and of the Holy Spirit: "He proceeds from the Father and the Son."

The Family of God

Here now is the precious thing. The Son has told us of the life of the family of God. And He has promised this life to us. The glorious outpourings of love, of Three Divine Persons giving themselves totally to each other in the oneness of the Divine Being—this is given to us by the Passion of the Only Son made man.

The Christian life for us is tuning in to the harmony of these three most blessed Persons. To this end and for this end the entire work of the Holy Spirit in the Church is directed.

The task the Holy Spirit pursues in the Church that Christ founded

is in accordance with what He does within the Godhead.

The texts above illustrate the total dependency of the Three Divine Persons on each other, so that in our regard no one Person acts in isolation.

It is true that Christ was made man and died for us. To Him we attribute the work of our Redemption. Yet at no time is Christ alone.

When Christ at the start of His ministry goes into the desert to pray, He is led by the *Spiriti* (Matthew 4:1). The Spirit inspires His words (Luke 10:21), and is the principle of His miracles (Matthew 12:28).

When redemption is accomplished upon Calvary then will be the time when the Spirit will be given to Christians.

Meantime the whole purpose and meaning of the Redemption is that men will acquire a new relationship to Christ's Heavenly *Father*. It is for the coming of His kingdom that Christ prays in the Our Father. Within that kingdom we are His children, His sons according to the Divine gift merited and won for us by Christ on His Cross.

To rise from the level of creature to that of child is a tremendous rise in human fortune. Such a rise, explains Christ to Nicodemus, is not possible without a spiritual rebirth. "Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:5).

The Baptist had urged repentance and offered baptism. Only Christ can offer the Holy Spirit. The Baptism instituted by Christ

remits sin, directly produces grace and gives the Holy Spirit. The baptism preached by John was intended to arouse in souls sorrow for sin and prepare the way for the Baptism of Christ. John himself declares, "I have baptized you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8). St. Paul at Ephesus realizing the inefficacy of John's baptism gave Christian Baptism to the Jews who had been baptized by John (Acts 19:2-5).

Born Again

When the Holy Spirit comes in the Baptism that Christ will command for all after His resurrection, then man will be born again (Matthew 28:19). Being born again will effect a complete transformation because Baptism is the sacrament that gives our souls the new life of sanctifying grace by which we become children of God and heirs of heaven. Nicodemus could only understand this rebirth as a return to the mother's womb. "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb?" (John 3:4). But this birth is being born of the womb of the Church. It is time now to consider how the Church was formed.

The word church comes from a Greek word meaning an assembly. As we know it the word nowadays stands for a society, an organization concerned with the spiritual well-being of its members. Like any society the Church has its rules and its authority, which is of a unique kind since it proceeds from Christ.

From one point of view all its members are absolutely equal since

each member is a member of the Church through Baptism which has an identical effect upon all who receive it. The same spiritual opportunities are open to all, but just here we find differences, for not all make the same use of the same opportunities.

From another angle its members are not all equal in the sense that only a few are generals in the Army though the General and the private are equally soldiers. In brief we are discussing a society, spiritual in origin yet visibly organized so that its light can be seen by men.

The beginnings of it are to be found in the Gospel pages. Christ chooses and trains twelve simple men. Some are fishermen, one is a tax collector, all are from Galilee save one, Judas Iscariot, who finally betrays Him.

To these men is given the Revelation of the Trinity and of Jesus Christ, Son of God, and they are taught that by believing in Him they will find life in His name.

One apostle, Simon Peter, is chosen as *leader*—"Thou art Peter, and

upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). Three times Peter denies his master during the Passion and three times after the Resurrection he is bidden: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep" (John 21:16-17).

All of them are given a *mission*. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," says the risen Christ. "Go, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you always even unto the consummation of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

But before they could discharge that mission they must first receive the Holy Spirit. He will teach them all things and will recall to them what Christ has taught them (John 14:26). When the Holy Spirit comes He will be sent by the Father at the request of the Son—"And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete, in order that he may be with you forever" (John 14:15-16).

LET US PRAY

O God, who hast taught the hearts of thy faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost: grant that by the gift of the same Spirit, we may be truly wise, relish what is right and ever rejoice in his holy consolations. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the same Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

Collect, Votive Mass of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Spirit In The Acts And The Epistles

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles is described in the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke, author of the third Gospel and friend of St. Paul.

The first twelve chapters of Luke's chronicle relate the Acts of Peter; the remaining sixteen relate the Acts of Paul.

In the very first chapters of this vital Christian document, the foundation of the Church under the seal of the Holy Spirit is described. Christ bids the Apostles tarry at Jerusalem in order that the promise of the Father may be fulfilled (Acts 1:4), adding that while John baptized with water they would be baptized soon with the Holy Spirit Himself. The result of this baptism (which is not the same as baptism of water) will be a strengthening. You will receive power, Christ says, (Acts 1:8) when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. These are the last words He spoke on earth just before His Ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9).

The gift of the Spirit came to them on Pentecost day. The communication of the Holy Spirit was



accompanied by signs. There was first a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind which swept through the house in which they were (Acts 2:2). Parted tongues as of fire rested above the head of each and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4).

As a consequence they received the gift of tongues, i.e., of speech in different languages. Attracted by the miraculous sound, a crowd gathered quickly, composed of Jews from different parts of Asia Minor on pilgrimage to the Holy City. Despite variations in language, those listening to the Apostles each heard words in their mother tongue (Acts 2:8).

Peter preached to the crowd. Christ Whom they crucified has risen from the dead, is exalted to the right hand of the Father Who has sent the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 2:33) Whose effects they have heard and seen.

He called them to "repent," which meant to change their whole manner of thinking and acting, particularly with regard to Jesus, and to have sorrow for their sins. To this was to be added the Baptism of

Christ, whereby they would come to belong to Christ so that not only would they receive forgiveness of sins, but the Holy Spirit would come to dwell in their souls.

At Peter's urging and exhortation, three thousand took the tremendous step of accepting Jesus of Nazareth, the suffering but risen Messiah, and became Christians. The work of the Holy Spirit is really as evident here as it was in the gift of tongues. Just a few hours before, all these devout pilgrims from all over the world had been in the Temple at the hour of sacrifice. They had had no doubts, no hesitations about their Jewish religious ideas. But now, before the morning had passed, all their outlook had been changed. Surely, St. Peter was the instrument for this spiritual miracle at the hands of God, but the thing which brought conviction to these "devout men from every nation" was the internal illumination of their minds brought about by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit in the Church

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the men Christ had chosen and trained and with the reception of the three thousand first Christians, *the Church had been born*. The rest of the Acts is the history of how the Church expanded all over the known world. In less than three hundred years, Christianity would be the official religion of the Roman Empire.

When Peter spoke, the memory of the Crucifixion would still be strong in his hearers' minds. For a simple man like Peter to present

the Crucified, Risen Christ as on the right hand of God Who sent the Holy Spirit, is a challenge to an audience which contained the normal number of skeptics. "But some mocked, saying: They are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13).

The fact that Peter did present successfully can only mean that the Holy Spirit transformed not only him but the audience as well. In these first beginnings we do indeed find signs and wonders which are lacking to us today. But the first beginnings of any new society are always crucial, and in order that the Church should be securely established it was fitting at that time, and under those circumstances, that the swirling clouds of spiritual radioactivity unleashed on Pentecost day should be given a visible and tangible form of expression. Thus Peter could tell his hearers that they had heard and seen the effects of the Holy Spirit, and Acts 5:12 records the many signs and wonders at the hands of the Apostles among the people.

But signs only point the way and their function in those days was to spotlight the growing Church which was of "one heart and one soul" being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In a way less spectacular than of old the Holy Spirit is still with the Church. "I will ask the Father," said Christ "and he will give you another Advocate to dwell with you forever" (John 14:15-16). For each generation of Christians the role of the Apostles is carried out by their successors, the Bishops of the Church.

Christ gave the power to teach,

to sanctify, and to rule the members of His Church to the Apostles, the first Bishops of the Church. The Bishops of the Church today are the successors of the Apostles because they have received their power of orders by valid consecration through an unbroken line of successors of the Apostles, and have received their power of jurisdiction through their union with the Pope, the successor of Saint Peter, and the visible head of the Church. God the Father and God the Son sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the Church. "But when the Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness concerning me" (John 15:26). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables the Bishops of the Church to teach, to sanctify, and to rule the faithful in the name of Christ.

The Church, A Visible Witness

The descent of the Holy Spirit is the final triumph of Christ. Christ triumphed by His unconditional surrender of Himself on the Cross for our sins. But since in Him life was as unconquerable as love, He arose from the dead. And since He was God, He returned to the place whence He came in the Ascension.

He left a world which was not ready to be united in love with God. Hence God's Holy Spirit came down on the Infant Church in a fresh outpouring of the Divine Love—under the sign of the burning fire of love and under the sign of the tongues, ten days after the Ascen-

sion. These were the external signs which manifested the internal change that had been wrought in the souls of all, for with the coming of the Holy Spirit their minds had been enlightened with His divine light to see and understand the truths of God, and their wills had been strengthened with a supernatural zeal and courage to profess their faith openly and to bring it to all men through their preaching and example.

But the Spirit came, too, under the sign of the mighty wind. For He is the breath of life to the Church of Christ. He makes the followers of Christ into one living whole, of one mind and heart, living the life of Christ as a new society to the glory and praise of the Heavenly Father.

"But you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God" (Corinthians 6:11).

"The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Under the seal of the Holy Spirit the society which is the Church lives the life Christ won by His death. It embodies all He lived and died for—in a sense it is His body, in the same sense that the United States embodies the ideas of Washington and Lincoln. But more so, for Washington and Lincoln are dead, but Christ has risen and sent the Holy Spirit abiding with us forever.

The Church, under the Holy Spirit, must be the visible witness

of the presence of Christ in the world, a witness to the point of blood if that be necessary; a chained witness in slave camps in the Urals; a silent witness in the jungles of Brazil; a frozen witness in Alaska; a leprous witness like Damien of Molokai; a witness against a wall in the dawn like Padre Pro in Mexico; a witness like those unnamed heroes whom lions tore to pieces in Roman amphitheatres, until their blood became the seed of Christians.

In last analysis the function of the Holy Spirit is the uniting of men with the Heavenly Father in Christ. Definition can proceed no further.

Our union with God the Father has been made possible by the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross for our sins. This is what we call our Redemption. Christ, Son of God, Son of Man has bought us back, paying the price of His blood.

Whatever He did as man, Christ also did as God for He was God made man, Only begotten of His Father yet born of Mary in Bethlehem. The price He paid was all He had to give, which was His life. This is the great act of Christ that has reconciled men to His Father.

Now Christ chose certain ways in which His redeeming act for all men should be available for each individual. It is as if the great wealth of sacrifice, all the merit of Christ's death, has been deposited in a bank, there for us if only we write the check and draw upon that treasury.

That "bank" is the Church and the "checks" we draw are signed by us when we receive the *Sacraments*.

These Sacraments are material

signs—the bread of the Eucharist, for example. Material bread nourishes us. This consecrated bread of the Eucharist gives us the spiritual nourishment Christ promised: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:50-52).

Christ here chooses that His spiritual Divine Action should work on individuals through a material thing, bread. He also chose that through the pouring of water in Baptism the Divine Action on men should begin. These Sacraments then have this in common that a spiritual Divine Action should be made available to individuals through material signs—the bread of the Eucharist, the water of Baptism, the oil of Confirmation (as we shall see), the utterance of the agreement to marry, etc.

We ourselves are a combination of something material and something spiritual—a material body and a spiritual soul. Hence the Sacraments are especially suited for God's dealings with us.

Their effect, as we shall see, is to make us grow in a special way like to Christ, so similar to Him that God treats us as *adopted* sons, so like Him that God elects in His Three Persons, to abide in our being, making of our bodies His Temple. All this demands a special Divine Action that is called sanctifying grace—literally a gift that makes us Holy.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION



The Holy Spirit pursues His function as Inspirer of the Church in a thousand subtle ways. But His work is not just external and concerned with the whole body of the Church. He continually works, too, in its individual members by the whisper of His gentle inspirations, despite the fact that some of those members throughout history have remained unmoved.

There are two main ways in which Divine Action takes place on persons. These are by the Sacraments of *Baptism* and *Confirmation*.

The great action of Christ was the reconciliation of men, estranged by sin, to His Father in heaven. Since all the time new generations of men and women are being born, Christ devised a way for the reconciling of each new generation. This way is the way of Baptism.

Christ defined this way, as we have seen, as being born again of water and the Holy Spirit. He laid down the form under which this rite should operate. It would, He said, have to operate in the name of the Trinity.

What He did was to designate a

particular material event—the washing with water—and to promise that whenever that event occurred according to His intention, He would attach to that event a specific Divine Action.

This specific Divine Action is defined as grace. Grace means a gift. The particular gift we receive at Baptism is God's own life earned for us by Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross.

St. Paul makes this crystal clear: "Know ye not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

His thought is that when we go under the baptismal waters we go with the dead Christ into the tomb. When He rises, we rise too. We share with Him a newness of life, a re-birth by the Holy Spirit.

This newness of life is Christ's own life, the life which He as God the Son possesses with God the Father through the bond of the Holy Spirit. Thus Paul writes in

Romans again: "And if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

Adopted Sons

The dead Christ lives again through the action of the Spirit of God. Christians, too, live their newness of life by the Spirit of Christ. What precisely is this *newness of life*? Further on in the same chapter Paul gives us the answer. "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father. For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that *we are the sons of God*. And if sons, heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16-17).

We can recall now the action of the Holy Spirit on the mother of Christ. Just as when He overshadowed her that by His power she could conceive Christ, in her womb, so now at Baptism He overshadows the font—the womb of the Church—that Christ should be born again in a spiritual way in the soul of the neophyte and in a special way which defines the baptized as Christians. Hence indeed the old word for baptism—christening—the putting on of Christ.

The Divine Action at Baptism, then, is nothing less than the transformation of God's creature into God's adopted child. This is what Paul means when he says "adoption of sons." Christ is the only-begotten Son—"the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"

(John 1:14), "and of his fullness we all have received" (John 1:16). "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name" (John 1:12).

That God should adopt any human being is incredible. It is so incredible that it is one of the things that nobody could invent. It is not surprising there should have to be a new creation of each of us at the fantastic moment when the hand of Christ reaches and finds the hand of the new Christian, and both murmur, "Our Father." This is Hiroshima in reverse.

Baptism is then a *birth*. Every Christian is a new child of God after Baptism. But children have to *grow up*, and that is where the second Divine Action comes into play, during the special rite called *Confirmation*. Once again the agent is the Holy Spirit, and once again His function is to deepen and strengthen Christ in Christians. As always, the goal of His action is the glory of the Father in the recognition of Christ in Christians.

Divine Action

Confirmation, like Baptism, takes a particular material event, in this case anointing with oil, and to that anointing there is attached a Divine Action. The Holy Spirit gives a further outpouring of the Divine life to us. He stands to us in a fresh relationship akin to that He acquired with the Apostles and disciples on Pentecost day. Confirmation is the subject's private Pentecost minus the extraordinary signs and wonders of that day. By

it we move to spiritual maturity. We shall return to this point when we have established that the Sacrament has been with the Church from the beginning.

The Gospels do not record the actual institution of Confirmation by Christ. The Acts of the Apostles, however, indicate that the Church possessed it from the beginning.

When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of baptisms performed by the deacon Philip in Samaria, "they sent to them Peter and John. On their arrival they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for as yet he had not come upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-18).

Paul found believers at Ephesus and questioned them: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" But they said to him, "We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2). Paul understood at once that they could not be baptized since Baptism is conferred in the name of the Trinity. He said: "How then were you baptized?" They said, "With John's baptism" (Acts 19:3). Paul explained the difference between the baptism of John and the Baptism of Christ and "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; and when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy" (Acts 19:5-6).

From these two texts we can conclude that at the dawn of the

Church there was a normal rite for conferring the Holy Spirit since its administration is a matter of course after Baptism, it is a distinct rite from Baptism, and it is conferred by an Apostle, i.e., a Bishop, because Philip is a deacon (Acts 6:5) and cannot confer it in Samaria. Peter and John must leave Jerusalem for Samaria to confirm.

In other places in the Acts (4:31; 6:5) courage in professing the faith is identified with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

These considerations indicate that the gift of the Holy Spirit was meant to be normal in the Church and create a reasonable presumption that the gift would be conferred by a Sacrament parallel with Baptism and the Holy Eucharist and other gifts promised by Christ. This presumption is in fact supported by the earliest writings among the Fathers and elders of the Church.

Early Testimonies

Writings from the third century indicate that Confirmation is a normal rite and a continuation of an Apostolic practice whereby the Holy Spirit is conferred in a manner distinct from that of Baptism.

Tertullian, third century, in his treatise *De Baptismo*, cc. 4-8, after describing how the Baptismal water derives its sanctifying power from the Holy Spirit, continues: "Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the waters: but in the water under the influence of the angel we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit... *thereupon the hand is imposed in blessing, calling and invit-*

ing the Holy Spirit."

In another passage in his *De Resurrectione Carnis*, ch. 8 he writes, "The flesh is shadowed by the imposition of hands that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit; the flesh is signed that the soul may be fortified."

St. Cyprian *Epistola 73, 9 ad Jubaianum*, third century writes: "Those who are baptized in the Church are presented to the prelates of the Church and by means of our prayers and the imposition of hands obtain the Holy Ghost and are perfected with the seal of the Lord."

In the fifth century there is an anonymous homily recorded entitled *De Pentecoste* and it is to be found in the *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum Vol. 6, p. 59*. It says "In Baptism we are regenerated, after Baptism we are confirmed for battle; Baptism washes, Confirmation strengthens... it arms and instructs us for the battles of the world... we are illumined through the Holy Ghost with spiritual wisdom."

It is time to examine just what Confirmation *does* to those who receive it. There is first of all a deepening and strengthening of that Divine Life we discussed above. God pours more of His love into that depth of man we call his spirit or soul.

At Baptism the Holy Spirit comes upon the new child of God enabling him to put on Christ, so to speak. The Heavenly Father looking at this adopted son can affirm what He affirmed of His Only Son in the waters of Jordan—that this baptized creature is now His beloved son and co-heir with Christ.

But the child has yet to grow in the likeness of Christ and so to mature it, make it more like to Christ, there is this new outpouring of the Spirit. God in His Trinity moves closer to us.

At the same time we move closer to God. Once baptized, a person acquires a new character, that of *son*. Once confirmed he carries another indelible quality—the character of *soldier*. These qualities are as indelible, once they have been acquired, as the color of a person's eyes. For that reason it has never been the practice of the Christian Church to repeat a valid Baptism and a valid Confirmation.

Soldier of Christ

That a person should be given the power to be a soldier of Christ does not mean that Christianity is military, only militant. In our natural lives we have continually to be on guard against hazards of illness, of traffic on the highway, of dishonest men and the like. In our newness of life there are hazards, too. We have to fight lest we be conquered by materialism. We have to give good example to our neighbors and make ourselves ambassadors of Christ. Confirmation does not make muscular Christians, it simply makes them positive and unashamed of putting into living practice the tenets and precepts of their Founder.

All of this calls for a special kind of wisdom and a special kind of courage and humility. The Holy Spirit helps us here with what are called the *Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit*. This sevenfold action has its

warrant in Isaias where it is prophesied of Christ: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isaias 11:2-3).

When the Holy Spirit is given to us in Confirmation these great virtues of Christ are His renewed gifts to us, gifts that strengthen mind and heart and make it possible, if we use them, to walk worthily of our Christian vocation.

First Martyr

Talking to the newly baptized Christians St. Peter defines them "as new-born babes" (1 Peter 2:2). The babe must grow to stature and as an example here is the story of Stephen, first Christian martyr, as told in Acts 6 and 7. He is defined as "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom," and as "full of grace and fortitude." He disputed in the synagogues in the early days of the Church at Jerusalem. His disputation was that Jesus was the Son of God. His time came and he was summoned before the High Priest and his council. With matchless oratory he traces the signs of God throughout the Old Testament from the day of Abraham to the day of Solomon, who built the wonderful Temple of God. But this Temple itself is now outdated for the Most High has dwelt among them in the Temple of the Body of Jesus.

Stephen accused his hearers of closing their hearts and ears to the Holy Spirit and with a ringing pro-

fession of faith, he cried: "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

They seized him and cast him out of the city and stoned him. And as the rocks came hurling at him he said, "'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Lord, do not lay this sin against them.' And with these words he fell asleep." (Acts 7:59-60).

Holding the garments of them that stoned him was a man called Saul. Later Saul was to become the great Apostle Paul. He did not know it but he would be baptized through the blood of Stephen. Courage and Love, these are the marks of the Spirit of God; and we find them in old Jerusalem where Stephen was stoned.

Each A Witness

Not all of us will be summoned to display the red badge of courage that was the glory of Stephen. The martyr, after all, is the supreme witness to the point of death. But all Christians of good will are summoned in the circumstances of their daily life to be witnesses of a sort. Consider these words of St. Augustine (Tract 8 on the First Epistle of St. John), "He who gives praise to God by word of mouth, cannot be so engaged always: he who extols Him by deeds of virtue can do so unceasingly. Works of mercy, acts of kindness, holy devotedness, blameless chastity, sober restraint—these one must practice at all times, whether we are at home or in the public places, whether we are in

the company of men or in the privacy of our apartments..."

Indeed in public places Christian virtue can be hard to practice. But it is the way in which the new-born spiritual babe grows to the fullness of stature of the man of Christ. Confirmation makes it possible. But in the end it has to be us who are responsible for responding to the breath of the Spirit.

Briefly, then, Confirmation reinforces the graces of Baptism and brings us into yet closer contact with the Holy Spirit. We are called to struggle for the Christian faith and to accept the witnessing of Christ to others by Christian living as our responsibility. We are strengthened in mind and heart to make us worthy of our vocation. The gifts are there for us to use.

MYSTERIES

A mystery of religion is not a truth about which we can know nothing; rather, it is a truth about which we cannot know everything. It is not so much an unscalable wall as an endless gallery into which the mind can progress further and further, without ever coming to an end. No matter how much the mind concentrates on a mystery, there will always remain a mass of truth it has not made its own.

All true believers in God must be prepared to accept mysteries as true on His divine authority. That is faith. Reason tells them that God can and has made revelations to men, and that because He is God He must be believed.

So faith does not mean intellectual suicide. The object of the intellect is truth. Sometimes it arrives at truth for itself, and that is reason. It knows something. But sometimes the intellect accepts the truth on the authority of another, and that is faith. It believes something. If the informant is human we have human faith, if the informant be God, we have divine Faith. But there can obviously be no real conflict between faith and reason because both give truth to the intellect.

"This Is The Faith", Francis J. Ripley

Administration Of Confirmation

Confirmation is that Sacrament in which, by the imposition of hands, unction and prayer, a baptized person is filled with the Holy Spirit for the inner strengthening of the spiritual life and for the courageous outward confession of Faith.

As it was in the beginning of the Church, so now, too, the ordinary minister of this Sacrament is the Bishop. No one below a Bishop can give this Sacrament of Confirmation unless he is given jurisdiction by the Pope himself. The Holy Father does sometimes give this permission to priests in missionary lands where Bishops may be few and far between. From ancient times the Popes also have given permission to the priests of the Greek Catholic Church to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Pius XII, in 1947, gave to all pastors, everywhere—when a Bishop is not available—permission to administer Confirmation to any unconfirmed person within their territory who is in danger of death from sickness, accident, or old age. As social conditions change with the years, the Church adjusts its own regulations regarding the ad-



ministration and reception of the Sacraments so that these channels of God's grace might be ever more easily available to its members.

When the actual ceremony of Confirmation begins, the Bishop stands facing those who are to be confirmed, with his hands extended towards them, symbolically extended *over* them. With his hands extended, the Bishop invokes the Holy Spirit upon the Confirmation candidates, saying (in Latin) the following prayer: "Almighty and eternal God, Who in Thy kindness hast given to these Thy servants a new birth through water and the Holy Spirit, and granted to them remission of all their sins: send forth from heaven upon them Thy sevenfold Spirit, the Holy Paraclete. Amen. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Amen. The Spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen. The Spirit of knowledge and piety. Amen. Mercifully fill them with the Spirit of Thy fear, and seal them with the sign of the cross of Christ, that they may obtain everlasting life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Then comes the essential part of

the ceremony, in which the Bishop places his hand upon the head of each individual. For this part some Bishops sit at the altar and the candidates come one by one to kneel before the Bishop. Other Bishops prefer to have the candidates kneel at the altar railing while the Bishop himself proceeds from one to the other. In either case, as he places his hand upon the head of the *confirmandus* (the one to be confirmed), the Bishop simultaneously traces, with his thumb, the sign of the cross on the person's forehead—having first dipped his thumb in the holy chrism. While doing this he says (in Latin), "I sign you with the sign of the Cross and I confirm you with the Chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Chrism is one of the three kinds of holy oil which a Bishop blesses each year at his Mass on Holy Thursday. The other two kinds of holy oil are the oil of catechumens (used in Baptism) and the oil of the sick (used in Extreme Unction). The holy oils, all of them, are composed of pure olive oil. From ancient times, olive oil has been looked upon as a strengthening substance; so much so that athletes were accustomed to bathe in olive oil before taking part in athletic contests. The significance of the holy oils used in the administration of the Sacraments is then very evident: the oil represents the strengthening effect of God's grace.

In holy chrism, the olive oil signifies the strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit received in the Sacrament. Besides the distinct and spe-

cial blessing which each holy oil receives, chrism, has another difference: balm has been mixed with it. Balm, sometimes used as a preservative, is a fragrant substance derived from the balsam tree. In holy chrism it signifies the sweetness of virtue and freedom from the corruption of sin.

The anointing of the forehead with chrism in the form of a cross signifies that the Catholic who is confirmed, as a soldier of Christ, must always be ready to profess his faith openly and to practice it fearlessly.

The Bishop then taps the candidate's cheek and concludes with a prayer that the Holy Spirit may dwell in the hearts of the confirmed. The gentle tap on the cheek is not an essential part of the ceremony; in fact it was only in the twelfth century that it was added to the rite of Confirmation. It is probable that this slight "blow on the cheek" was taken over from the medieval custom of "dubbing" knights. The action reminds the confirmed that he must be ready to suffer everything, even death, for the sake of Christ.

An ancient Whitsunday sermon, delivered by a Bishop of Southern Gaul in the fifth century (Bib. Max. SS.PP. vi. p. 649) has this to say: "The Holy Ghost Who comes down with a life-giving descent upon the waters of Baptism, in the font bestows beauty unto innocence, in Confirmation grants an increase unto grace. Because we have to walk during our whole life in the midst of invisible enemies and dangers, we are in baptism regenerated unto

life, after baptism we are confirmed for the battle; in baptism we are cleansed, after baptism we are strengthened... confirmation arms and furnishes weapons to those who are reserved for the wrestings and contests of this world."

Confirmation Name

It is customary in the ceremony of Confirmation to add a new name to those already possessed. Through the choice of a new Christian name, the candidate is placed under the protection of an additional patron saint. One who assumes new responsibilities as a soldier in the army of Christ, as a witness of everything Christ represents, will treasure the prayerful help of a special friend in heaven. So another saint's name is added to those already possessed. It is by this new name that the Bishop addresses the candidate as he bestows the Sacrament.

For many centuries in both the Western and Eastern Churches the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered to infants immediately after their Baptism. This procedure still obtains in the East and in some parts of the Western Church, like Spain and South America. But since about the thirteenth century the custom of postponing the administration of Confirmation until the children had attained the use of reason was introduced in the West. At the present, in the Latin rite of the Church, the age for Confirmation, in the normal case, is between seven and ten years. Moreover, it is the mind of the Church that children should receive the Sacrament of Confirmation before being ad-

mitted to first Holy Communion. Confirmation is the complement of Baptism and hence the natural order of reception is Baptism, Confirmation, the Blessed Eucharist. Customs to the contrary, in these non-essential matters, are tolerated by the Church when serious reasons are present.

To receive Confirmation properly it is necessary to be in the state of sanctifying grace, that is, free from the guilt of serious sin. In the ordinary case, the candidate must know well the chief truths and duties of the Catholic religion. Adults who have never been confirmed, whether converts or otherwise, can easily arrange to be confirmed by consulting with their pastor.

Sponsor

Whether child or adult, the candidate for Confirmation, in accordance with a very ancient usage of the Church, should, if possible, have a sponsor. The sponsor must be of the same sex as the person for whom he stands and at least thirteen years of age. The sponsor must be a practicing Catholic who already has been confirmed — and he may not be one of the Confirmation candidate's baptismal godparents, unless a serious reason requires. Like the baptismal godparents, the Confirmation sponsor has the duty to do all in his power, especially by example and encouragement, to help his spiritual "ward" achieve a fully Catholic life.

The existence of sponsors is a reminder that the Holy Spirit in making one Church of all Chris-

tians makes us members one of another with Christ as our head. In that body none should be isolated or alone if ever in spiritual need, and with such need in mind, sponsorship has been devised for Baptism and Confirmation.

Necessity

Christian charity towards oneself demands that such an important means of grace, as the Sacrament of Confirmation, should not be left unused. Without Baptism one cannot get to heaven. Without Confirmation a person can get to heaven but the going will be more difficult. In fact, without Confirmation it would be easy to lose the way entirely, easy to lose one's faith. That is why it is of obligation for every baptized person to be also confirmed if he has the opportunity of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Even if there be no express Divine commandment to receive Confirmation, the Divine mandate to receive it may be deduced from its institution by Christ. Jesus instituted each individual

Sacrament because He foresaw, in His infinite wisdom, that we would have need of certain special graces under certain particular circumstances.

Christ foresaw, among other things, the dangers to which each Christian would be exposed. Some of the dangers would be from within, as when passion or self-will wars with belief. Other dangers would be from without, as when one must suffer active persecution by imprisonment or torture — as so many Christians in Communist countries. The dangerous state of those who live — as in America — in an atmosphere of religious indifferentism is not so obvious an outward danger but is just as real. The danger of contagion is always present.

The special sacramental grace of Confirmation is a strengthening of one's faith. On the negative side, a person's faith is strengthened against temptation and persecution; on the positive side, one's faith is strengthened to the end that he may become an active witness to Christ.

PRAYER FOR CONVERSIONS

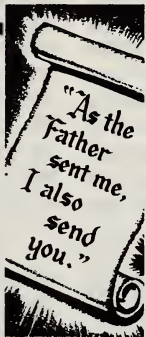
O Holy Spirit of Truth, we beseech thee to enlighten the minds of unbelievers in the midst of us, to incline their hearts to receive thy word, and to believe the teachings of thy Church; give them courage to accept the faith and to profess it openly; that they may come into union with thee and the Father, through Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth forever and ever. Amen.

Holy Ghost Prayerbook, Hoeger

Witnesses To The Truth

Authority in the Church of Christ is of a special nature. He vested authority in the men He chose (John 15:16) and sent them with His authority, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). The Apostles were instructed by Christ to teach—"...make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20); to sanctify — not simply to baptize (Matthew 28:19), but also to forgive sin "whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven" (John 20:23); and to legislate—"whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). In turn the Apostles ordained chosen men as Bishops to be their successors in the task of teaching, sanctifying and ruling mankind (1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; Acts 13:3).

Upon the Apostles as upon their successors came the Holy Spirit to inspire them and keep their teaching free from basic error (Acts 13:4, 52). So too He comes upon those who receive the Sacrament of Confirmation that they with their Bishops may be the body which lives the life Christ won by His



death, and in turn bear witness to that truth for which He was born and came into the world.

This society which is in the world but not of the world has as its major function to enshrine the presence of Christ in the world for all the generations which Christ came to teach and save. It has to be the living body in which men share the life of God, receive it through the Sacraments, and offer up their prayers and sacrifice to God. They take part, in their own persons, in those acts in which the Church makes present the saving act of Christ. Through the Church the saving act of Christ on Calvary is offered to all mankind and can only be limited by those who freely reject the salvation which is offered.

As a body which offers the truth of Christ to the world it is animated by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, and by His power it bears witness in such a way that when the whole body speaks with all the Bishops acting in concert, it is preserved from error. Individual Bishops indeed may err, but not the whole body of the successors of

the Apostles, nor that Supreme Pontiff who in the footsteps of Peter possesses that special authority given to the rock upon whom Christ built His Church.

But the Church is not a static body whose function it is to keep men from error, it is a dynamic body whose function and whose destiny through time is to bear positive witness to truth. Nor is the Church just the Bishops any more than the army is just its generals. Bishops, pastors and laity are all involved in some way in witnessing to the truth.

It is just here that Christian laymen taught by their Hierarchy (a group name for Bishops in a country) can bear witness in their trades, professions, careers, public and community service to the transforming effects of Christ's truth and life as it affects them. But their external activities to be fruitful and of value must flow from the charity imbibed from the Holy Spirit Who dwells in them.

Living Image of Christ

Just as the Holy Spirit formed Christ in the womb of His mother and conceives Christ in our souls at Baptism, so too by Confirmation gifts He can help us, if we cooperate, in following the example of Christ more perfectly, as He fosters the growth of the living image of Christ in the soul of man.

Christianity, of course, is a fine-sounding word; but the translation of it into actual fact demands immense spiritual strength and a heart saturated with charity. Constant prayer and regular use of the Sacra-

ments of the Church would seem to be the shapers of the lay apostle.

"You shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). It is the duty of each lay apostle, each spiritually mature and adult member of the Catholic and apostolic Church to be a witness. The Church is the authentic witness to Jesus Christ on earth, and every responsible citizen of this City of God shares in that divinely appointed function of the Church, according to the place which he occupies in the organism of the Mystical Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ

This is surely the deep significance of that gift of tongues which in the primitive Church, both on the day of Pentecost and on other occasions, gave external proof of the coming of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Ghost descended upon them, and they spoke with tongues"; as though to say, they were confirmed and they bore witness. And not only did they bear witness, but they bore witness in the tongues of every nation under heaven, because they were members of a Church not only apostolic but catholic also.

As St. Augustine aptly observes, in Jerusalem the universal mission of the Church had already begun, and the Pentecostal tongues were but a symbol to foreshadow the reality of a Church which would in fact, and not merely in figure, preach the gospel throughout the world. And if the Mystical Body of Christ is a witness, he argues, then every member of it is a witness too. "I, too," he exclaims, "I, too, speak with the tongues of all nations. Am

I not in the Body of Christ, am I not in the Church of Christ? If the Body of Christ speaks with the tongues of all nations, then the tongues of all nations are mine" (Enarr. in psalm cxlvii 19).

Such is the glorious task to which Confirmation calls the Christian lay apostle and for which it endows him. Already truly a member of the Church, he now becomes a spokesman of the Church, of the Church which, "like a standard set up unto the nations, calls to itself those who have not yet believed, and at the same time gives assurance to its own children that the faith which they profess reposes on the firmest of foundations" (Vatican Council, *De fid. cath.*, cap. 3). Proudly conscious of his citizenship, the lay apostle testifies to the world that he is indeed a follower of Christ and an upholder of his faith, ready if need be to die as a

soldier in its defense. In Baptism the life of grace appears as a white garment to be kept pure and unspotted from the stains of the world; in Confirmation the faith is raised aloft as a flying banner, under which we march as strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Christianity belongs to the whole world—that is the message of the Spirit of Truth—but the whole world does not belong to Christ—that is the message of the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. The final issue between them could be atomic. But the Spirit of Jesus burns hotter than the Bomb and when it burns it does not consume. Here lies the last best hope—that instead of holocaust we will have Pentecost, in that men of good will inflamed by the fire of the Spirit will conquer not with weapons but with love.

Love can be used either as an essential name of the divine nature or as a personal name of a divine person—then it is the proper name of the Holy Ghost, as *Word* is the proper name of the Son.

St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*,
1, 37, 1. (13th cent.)

A gift is freely given, and expects no return. Its reason is love. What is first given is love; that is the first gift. The Holy Ghost comes forth as the substance of love, and *Gift* is His proper name.

St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica*,
1, 38, 2. (13th cent.)

Charismatic Gifts: *Tongues, Healing*

The word "charism" used by Paul sixteen times has a variety of senses. In the widest sense, the term means any good gift that flows from God's love to man. In the strict sense, the expression "charisms" means certain gratuitous supernatural gifts, which manifest the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church by bestowing upon certain individuals the faculties to perform various extraordinary works, primarily for the good of the entire Church. These gifts are often mentioned, by Luke in the Acts (10:44-46; 19:6), by Peter (1 Peter 4:10 f), and especially by Paul (Romans 12: 6-8; 1 Corinthians 12 to 14; Galatians 3:5; Ephesians 4:7-12).

These extraordinary gifts are gratuitous; they are due, not to the merits or sanctity of those who possess them, but to the one Holy Spirit who freely distributes them to whomever He wishes, according to the needs of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:11). The individual faithful may be blessed with one or more of these spiritual gifts and they may be bestowed not only upon the just but also on sinners



(1 Corinthians 13:1-3; Matthew 7:22 f).

The primary purpose of the charisms is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, who inspires individuals for the advantage and utility of the entire Church. The secondary purpose of the charisms was to dispose unbelievers to accept the truths of the gospel. The exercise of the charisms may lead unbelievers to their conversion (Acts 2:12), or may manifest their infidelity (1 Corinthians 14:21-25).

Gift of Tongues

One of the many charisms was the gift of tongues. The gift of tongues consisted in an articulate, intelligible utterance that at times had to be interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:5, 9, 13, 19). The object of this gift was not for preaching or teaching, but for speaking to God in prayer, praise or thanksgiving, in a quasi-ecstatic state, while the speaker retained some degree of consciousness. This utterance, which was not understood by its hearers without the gift of interpretation, consisted in the use by a speaker of strange or foreign languages different from his

own and hitherto unknown to him.

The primary purpose of this charism was the manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit for the advantage of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12). The edification of the Church was attained in so far as this evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence among the faithful was for their consolation, and, with the addition of the gift of interpretation, the faithful were stimulated to praise God and were enabled to receive new knowledge concerning things divine. The secondary purpose of this gift was for the advantage and edification of the speaker himself. For the unbelievers, it served as a sign to manifest their infidelity or to lead ultimately to their conversion.

Besides the promise of Christ in His farewell instructions to His Apostles, that His disciples "shall speak in new tongues" (Mark 16:17), Luke mentions the manifestation of this charism at Jerusalem (Acts 2:4), Caesarea of Palestine (Acts 10:46), and Ephesus (Acts 19:6). And this particular charism "the gift of tongues" continued in the early Church for a brief period. As a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit it aided the spread and growth of Christianity because it proved its divine character. Once the Church became established, such an abnormal phenomena rapidly became a thing of the past, at least as a regular feature of Christianity.

The gift of tongues was never a charism enjoyed by all Christians, as St. Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. If one insists

upon taking the promises of Christ (Mark 16:17-18) literally as a guarantee that those signs would always and everywhere and in each instance attend those who believe in Him, then a person should also be able to drink any deadly thing without being injured. The Holy Spirit had no intention of continuing in the Church gifts ordained only to the pressing needs of initial stages. When Montanus claimed to be restoring such gifts in the middle of the 2nd century, he was at once branded as an innovator, an imposter, and a heretic. Periodic efforts to "revive" and claims to possess such charismatic gifts are only a renewal of the ancient heresy of Montanism.

Gift of Healing

The gift of healing is another charism that was conferred upon some Christians to cure miraculously the sick (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30). A miracle is a divinely performed sensible effect beyond the common order of nature. A miracle is performed to remind men of God's power over the laws of nature and to manifest his goodness and justice.

Christ Himself cured all diseases with equal facility, instantaneously, permanently, by a word, a gesture, and even at a distance. Christ performed miracles to prove His divine mission, to strengthen the faith of those who believed in Him, to manifest His love for men, and to raise men's thoughts to supernatural realities. Christ possessed the permanent power of performing miracles; the saints and other wonder-

workers are granted only a transient power.

In the New Testament we do read that frequently, although on particular occasions only, miracles of healing were wrought by Christ and by those in the early Church who had received the charismatic gift of healing. But these occasional miracles were not merely for the sake of conferring the physical benefits of health. They were signs to induce and confirm faith in the Christian religion. They were that men might believe "for the works' sake." Not for a moment was healing in such a way intended to be an essential part of the Christian religion, or to continue as an ordinary means of the apostolate. The essential commission of the Church was to teach all nations the truth, to preserve order and unity within itself by legislative authority, and to labor for the salvation and sanctification of souls.

As with "speaking in tongues" and other extraordinary phenomena, so with miracles of healing, such wonders were wrought in the beginning in order to get the Church rapidly and safely established. As soon as this need ceased, the miraculous gifts were more and more rarely manifested; although in no period in the history of the Church have they been entirely absent.

Faith healing or spiritual healing is a form of mental healing that makes use of suggestion based upon religious considerations, motives, and appeal. Because of the relationship between mind and body, strong suggestions from one

in whom we have confidence may be beneficial to health. Mental attitudes can affect the nervous system, whilst emotion has an effect upon the glands, accelerating or retarding even physical processes. Local pain, which might appear to be the symptom of some deep-seated disease, can be caused by a state of mind. Obviously, in such a case, it could be removed by a change of one's mental outlook. Functional disorders, such as immoral habits, nervous ailments, drunkenness, high blood pressure, arthritis, rheumatism, migraine, can be sometimes aided by religious suggestions. Healing by mental suggestion is morally lawful, for it is the employing of a natural medical means.

Two things, however, must here be noted; the limits of mental healing, and the dangers attendant upon it. Faith healing as a form of mental healing is restricted to functional disorders. No efforts of the imagination, no degree of self-persuasion, can cure organic diseases. No mental state can be induced which will restore life to a dead optic nerve, or mend broken bones, or replace a kidney that has been surgically removed.

The danger is that people may have a really serious organic disease yet feel relieved of pain by psychological exaltation, or transient mass hypnosis. As a consequence they may imagine that they are cured although only symptoms have been banished from consciousness, the root cause of the trouble remaining unaffected. When the inevitable relapse follows, it may be too late for successful medical or surgical

remedies.

It remains true, however, that within its own proper sphere natural mental healing or psychotherapy, has had notable successes in the curing of physical ills.

Erroneously, some "faith healers" claim or cleverly lead persons to believe that they possess the Biblical gift of healing similar to the power of Christ. They speak of "faith healing" or of "divine healing" rather than of merely "mental healing," making God, and not any natural factors, responsible for such results as they claim to obtain. Results of merely natural psychological factors are wrongly regarded as miracles due to a special intervention on the part of God.

Since God, Who is all-truthful, is the principal cause of a miracle, it cannot be worked in support of a lie. If an individual claims miraculous powers of healing, then he should be willing to work under the careful scrutiny of a competent medical staff. In this manner the cures of such a faith healer could be properly authenticated.

The Catholic Church is not in opposition to the idea of miraculous healing. Such miracles have occurred from time to time through all the centuries; and there still occur at Lourdes, in France, for example, instantaneous cures of organic diseases which no natural means could effect and which have been attested to by medical experts after the severest scientific investigation.

The Church denies that the function of healing the sick by extraordinary and supernatural means is

a normal part of its mission. It has never officially engaged in efforts at such miracle-working. We know from their biographies that Saints individually have done the most remarkable things. Or astonishing cures have occurred unpredictably at this shrine or that. But, officially, the Catholic Church has devoted itself to the exercising of Christian charity towards the sick by building and staffing hospitals throughout the world for the care of the afflicted. The Church never gives its official sanction to any reported miraculous cure unless it has received the most thorough scientific examination.

Psychical research workers can do a useful service to religion by helping to map out the borderlines between the supernatural, the direct action of God; the paranormal (beyond the normal), which, in spite of its mysterious appearance, may arise from natural causes; and the phony miracles with which our era abounds. They can help in the struggle against superstition and occultism, against the preoccupation with the marvelous that can crowd out true religious feeling, and against the damage done to the reputation of true miracles by their ridiculous or illusory imitations.

Men have always needed and will always need the serious critical studies of such subjects, eliminating or at any rate reducing the part played by the passion for the extraordinary in the religious make-up of people dominated by sensibility, imagination, and morbid curiosity. It is well known that the marvelous, true or false, has a great attraction

for neurotic and unbalanced persons. It is only too easy to see how much evil is done by lecturers, and editors of periodicals who are always on the look-out for strange manifestations, absurd miracles, grotesque apparitions, etc., occurrences which the Church has never endorsed and will be very careful not to endorse, since, as Cardinal Ottaviani has said, it is "the enemy of false miracles."

The Unpardonable Sin

A question which commonly arises in reference to the Holy Spirit is based upon a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Mark 3:28-30: "'Amen I say to you, that all sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men, and the blasphemies wherewith they may blaspheme; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but will be guilty of an everlasting sin.' For they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" Is there then an unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost?

Every passage of Sacred Scripture must be understood in the light of its complete context. Christ, the Son of God, has been performing good works in accord with the will of His Father. The Pharisees accuse Him of possessing an unclean spirit and working His wonders through the power of the devil.

Now it is to be noted that Christ does not say that this sin against the Holy Spirit (the Third Person of the Trinity to Whom are attributed the manifestations of God's works of holiness) *cannot* be forgiven, as though God would not forgive it if a man repented, but

that it *will* not be forgiven, meaning that by its very nature it rules out forgiveness.

Christ begins by stating that all sins may be forgiven, even that most horrible one of blasphemy; but what He calls "blasphemy against the Spirit," this will not be forgiven. And why is such a sin without forgiveness? Because for the forgiveness of sin a man must repent and seek pardon whence only it can come: from the mercy of God. The Pharisees sinned by ascribing the works of God (Holy Spirit) performed through Christ, to the power of Satan. While rejecting God, the Pharisees could never have forgiveness, because only God ultimately can forgive sin.

Actually no sin is unpardonable, absolutely speaking, either by God, or the Church that forgives in God's name. A properly disposed sinner will always be pardoned. The text above refers to those sinners who refuse to repent and therefore cannot obtain forgiveness because they do not wish it.

The Feast of Pentecost

Whitsunday (Pentecost), with Christmas and Easter, ranks among the great feasts of Christianity. It commemorates not only the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and Disciples (Acts 2:1-4) but also the fruits and effects of that event: the completion of the work of redemption, the fullness of grace for the Church and its children, and the gift of faith for all nations.

The official name of the feast is "Pentecost." This word was already used in the Old Testament.

It comes from the Greek *pentekoste* (the fiftieth), meaning the fiftieth day after Easter. On this day the Jews celebrated a great religious festival of thanksgiving for the year's harvest, the Feast of First-fruits (Exodus 23:16). The Jews used the word Pentecost to indicate not only the feast itself but also the whole season of fifty days preceding it. The early Christian Church accepted the Jewish usage and called the whole season from Easter to Whitsunday "Pentecost." It was a festive time of religious joy, no fasts were kept, and the faithful prayed standing in honor of Christ's resurrection.

The feast itself was held annually from very early times. The famous writer Tertullian (third century) mentions it as a well-established Christian feast and as the second date for the solemn baptism of catechumens (the first being Easter). Pentecost is also called "Whitsunday" (White Sunday) because of the fact that the newly baptized appeared in white garments for the services of the day.

In the Latin rite of the Church, the color of the liturgical vestments worn by the priest is red, symbolizing the love of the Holy Spirit Who descended upon the Apostles in tongues of fire.

Variety of Names

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is designated by a variety of names in the New Testament. He is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Father. Also the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, and

the Spirit of Jesus. Very often the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is called Holy Spirit, or simply the Spirit. By reason of the various effects conferred upon the soul, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit is also called "Paraclete." Paraclete means primarily an advocate or defender, and secondly a comforter, exhorter, or intercessor.

Holy Spirit

The name "Holy Spirit" is used today in preference to "Holy Ghost," though both expressions as referring to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity are still in common usage. A ghost is associated with a disembodied spirit of a dead person, conceived of as appearing to the living as a pale, shadowy apparition, and therefore "Holy Spirit" is a more appropriate translation and expression for the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

It is essential for Christians to have the Holy Spirit reside in them in order to be spiritual "You, however, are not carnal but spiritual, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). Christians must preserve in the law of grace begun with the Holy Spirit, the principle of the new life of grace (Galatians 3:3). Hence, their conduct must not be sensual but spiritual, that is, according to grace (Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16).

Christians must avoid sins of impurity, because God is the avenger of them, because He has called

Christians to sanctification, and because He has given them the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:6-8), Who dwells in them as in His own temple: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy; for holy is the temple of God, and this temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16). They are to pray at all times in the Spirit, that is, in a fervor animated and inspired by the Holy Spirit "With all prayer and supplication pray at all times in the Spirit, and therein be vigilant in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me" (Ephesians 6:18).

Christians are to practice charity towards their neighbors (Ephesians 4:30-32), to be considerate of them

and to avoid everything which fosters disunity, because all were regenerated by means of the same Baptism, were incorporated into the one Mystical Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit, and were made to drink of one Holy Spirit, Who poured out His gifts upon all the faithful, as in the Sacrament of Confirmation (1 Corinthians 12:13). They must be solicitous to preserve the unity of the Spirit (that is, the unity effected by the Holy Spirit) in the bond of peace "... careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism; One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and throughout all, and in us all" (Ephesians 4:3).



The Holy Ghost is not of an inferior nature to the Father and the Son, but, so to say, consubstantial and coeternal.

St. Augustine: *Of the Faith and the Creed*. (4th cent.)

Now what the soul is to the body of man, the Holy Spirit is in the body of Christ, which is the Church. The Holy Spirit does that in the whole Church, which the soul does in all the members of a single body.

St. Augustine: *Sermon 267*, 4, 4. (5th cent.)

As "to be born" is, for the Son, to be from the Father, so, for the Holy Ghost, "to be the Gift of God" is to proceed from Father and Son.

St. Augustine: *De Trinitate*, 4, 20. (5th cent.)

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