

LESSON 1: Who is the Holy Spirit?

CONTENTS OF LESSON:

1. The Holy Spirit is the last of the three persons to be revealed; though he was present and active from the beginning. He is one of the divine persons of the Holy Trinity: He is God; to be worshipped and glorified with the Father and Son. He shares the same substance and nature with them. *[CCC255, 684, 685]*
2. The name 'Holy Spirit' was given to us by Christ himself. The titles and symbols of the Holy Spirit tell us more about how he acts and what he does. *[CCC691-704]*

TITLES:

- i. Paraclete: It means 'He who is called to one's side'. He is our companion, our consoler.
- ii. Spirit of Christ: He brings Christ to us.
- iii. Spirit of God: He proceeds from God and is God.
- iv. Spirit of Truth: He reveals the truth to us.
- v. Spirit of Glory: He fills us with the life of God (glory) which we lost in sin.
- vi. Spirit of Adoption: He makes us children of God at our Baptism.

SYMBOLS:

- i. Breath of God, air, wind: He is invisible, yet moves with power, brings life.
- ii. Water: He brings us new life; reminds us of the water of birth: we are born again.
- iii. Anointing oil: He was the 'anointing' of Christ. He gave Christ power and a mission. Christ anoints us with the Holy Spirit.
- iv. Fire: He purifies and transforms us.
- v. Cloud and light: He reveals God, and at the same time veils him.
- vi. Seal: He imprints an indelible mark on us.
- vii. Hand and finger: He is God's hand in creation. He is the 'finger of God' that casts out demons, wrote on the stone tablets.
- viii. Dove: A sign of a new beginning, reminding us of Noah, and of Christ's Baptism.



3. *I realize the way the Holy Spirit acts and that I need his action in my life.*

REFERENCES: Genesis 1:2; 8:8-12; Exodus 31:18; 40:36-38; Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:16; 9:34-35; 11:20; 12:49; John 3:8; 4:14; 14:26; 16:13; 20:22. Acts 1:9; 2:2; Romans 8:9, 15; 1Cor 12:13; Ephesians 1:13,14; 1Peter 4:14.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts; folded slips of paper with the titles and symbols of the Holy Spirit.

I. STARTER:

- We have now come to the third and last unit for this year. What have we been studying till now? *[The Father and then the Son.]*
- What do you think the subject of this unit will be? *[The Holy Spirit]*
- So, who is the Holy Spirit? Can you think of one sentence to describe him? *[Students write and then share.]*
- Why do you think we are taking this topic last? Is it because the Holy Spirit is the least important? *[No! The Holy Spirit is equal in glory, power and majesty with the Father and the Son. He is God, sharing the same nature and substance. So he is not 'less' in any way, but we are following God's own plan: In the Bible we see that the Holy Spirit is the last of the three persons of the Trinity to be revealed, although he was active from the very beginning. At first the Father came to be known, then Jesus came to earth, then after Jesus had completed his mission, the Holy Spirit was poured out on us.]*

II. DEVELOPMENT:

- We all know something about the Holy Spirit, but there is a lot more for us to discover. If we want to relate to him and experience him in our lives, we need to find out more about him.

We began our study of Jesus by... *[Students could look back and answer]* looking at his names and titles. We will do the same with the Holy Spirit, who is a more mysterious person.

- Before we begin, can you tell us: Where did we get the name 'Holy Spirit' from? *[Read Matthew 28:20]* *[Jesus himself gave us this name.]*

[Give out the handouts. The students could work in pairs to find the answers.]

- By looking up the Bible references in the picture, you should be able to find out 6 titles of the Holy Spirit. One of the references has 2 titles. Let's see who can get all 6 titles in 5 minutes.

[After 5 minutes go over the titles, commenting briefly as given below:]

1. Paraclete: It literally means 'He who is called to one's side'. Some translations of the Bible may have names like Helper, Advocate, Consoler, Comforter. It is the name given by Jesus. He wanted us to realize that the Holy Spirit walks beside us, comforts us and helps us right through our lives.
 2. Spirit of Christ: When the Holy Spirit comes into us, he brings Christ to us. He gives us the qualities of Christ.
 3. Spirit of God: He proceeds from God and is God.
 4. Spirit of Truth: He opens our eyes to the truth. (The opposite of Satan, who tries to deceive us.)
 5. Spirit of Glory: When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the glory of God. When the Spirit comes into us he fills us again with God's life, his glory.
 6. Spirit of Adoption: He makes us children of God at our Baptism.
- Let us look now at the symbols in the picture. What symbols can you pick out?

[As a class write the symbols in the correct spaces, then allot 2 symbols to each group. They look up the references and explain how the symbol expresses something about the Holy Spirit: how he acts. (Students could use the back of their handouts for writing their suggestions. After about 10 minutes, allow students to give their ideas and bring out the following, while all write in their handouts:)]

1. Breath of God: The word 'spirit' in Hebrew is 'RUAH' which could mean breath, air or wind. The Holy Spirit is invisible, yet moves with power, like the wind.
Examples in the Bible:
 1. Right at the beginning, when the world was being created, a WIND from God, or the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Every creature has received life through the Holy Spirit.
 2. At Pentecost there was the sound of a mighty WIND and the disciples received the Holy Spirit.
 3. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Spirit was like a WIND that blows.
 4. Jesus BREATHED on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit!"
2. Water: Reminds us of the water of birth: we are born again when the Spirit comes to us. Drinking water is also necessary for life.
Examples from the Bible:
 1. When Jesus met the woman at the well, he offered her 'LIVING WATER'. He said that it would be like a spring that would give her eternal life.
 2. Saint Paul also talks about 'DRINKING' of the Spirit.
3. Anointing oil: In India we massage babies with oil to keep them healthy and strong. Oil is a sign of empowering. When someone was anointed in the Old Testament, it meant that they were given a special mission. The name Christ means 'Anointed One'. The Father anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit to go out and fulfill his mission. Jesus in turn anoints us with the Holy Spirit and sends us on a mission.
Examples from the Bible: Saul and David were ANOINTED as king.
4. Fire: Fire is powerful. It gives light and heat. It can even melt metals, purify gold and silver. It has the power to transform wood to ashes. In the same way, the Holy Spirit has power to purify and transform us.

Examples from the Bible:

1. At Pentecost, tongues of FIRE appeared.
 2. John the Baptist told the people that Jesus would baptize them with FIRE and the Holy Spirit.
 3. Jesus said, 'I came to cast FIRE upon the earth!' He was talking about the Holy Spirit.
5. Cloud and light: Just as a cloud can cover the sun, so that our eyes are protected from its brightness, the Holy Spirit is a sign of God's presence. He reveals God, and at the same time veils him. The bright light is a sign of God's glory.

Examples from the Bible:

1. The Israelites following Moses to the Promised Land were accompanied by a CLOUD.
 2. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, a CLOUD came down and covered them.
 3. When he ascended into heaven, again it was a CLOUD that took him up, out of sight. He will come at last in the same way: on the CLOUDS.
6. Seal: A seal is meant to be a mark of ownership and protection, something that cannot be erased. E.g. A legal document is made official by a seal, or an official stamp. When we are anointed at Baptism and Confirmation we are 'sealed' by God with the Holy Spirit. (These sacraments cannot be repeated)

Examples from the Bible:

1. Jesus said that the Father had set his SEAL on him.
 2. St. Paul said, 'You were SEALED with the promised Holy Spirit and he is our guarantee that we will receive our inheritance.'
7. Hand and finger: We use our hands to touch, to do most kinds of work, to paint, cook, write.

Examples from the Bible:

1. The Holy Spirit is God's HAND with which he created the world, his HAND with which he forms us (like a potter forming a clay vessel).
 2. God's law was written on the stone tablets by the 'FINGER OF GOD', that is, by the Holy Spirit. Now he writes his word on our hearts.
 3. Jesus placed his HANDS on people and healed them. He said that it was by the 'FINGER OF GOD' that he cast out demons. In other words, Jesus worked by the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. Dove: The dove itself doesn't have any special characteristics of the Holy Spirit, but it reminds us of the story of Noah, where a dove brought hope of new life.

Examples from the Bible:

1. When everything was destroyed by the flood, Noah sent a DOVE out to check if there was any sign of life in the world. It brought back a fresh olive branch.
2. When Jesus was baptized, a DOVE descended on him and John the Baptist recognized it as a sign of the Holy Spirit.

III. INTERIORISATION/PRAYER:

- Prayerfully go over all the symbols and titles of the Holy Spirit. Pick any one that expresses something you need, desire. Write down on the back of your handouts why it is meaningful to you. E.g. "For me the title 'Spirit of Adoption' is meaningful, because I want to belong to someone. I need the Holy Spirit to show me in a real way that I have become a daughter of God, and that God really looks after me like a father. I feel this will give me peace."
After 5 minutes we will share this with our partners.
[After both partners share, they pray for each other, asking the Holy Spirit to bless them.]

IV. ACTIVITY:

[Students play 'Dumb Charades': one student picks a slip of paper containing the name of one of the titles/symbols. He/she tries to depict it by his actions (NO SPEAKING) The others try to guess.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT: ⇌ Read the handout.