

THIS IS OUR FAITH!

4. I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

It is interesting that while many people do not practice a religion, there is nevertheless an extraordinary interest in "spiritual" things. Spiritual practices, like meditation and yoga, spiritual curiosities, like ghosts and the paranormal, and ideas of personal and spiritual development seem to grow in popularity just as the practice of religion is thought to decline.

Yet often these are very narrow and very self-centred ideas of what is spiritual. They are about an inner-self, and personal fulfilment. In this idea, the Spirit is an internal source of well-being, or good-feeling, of motivation and emotion.

Belief in the Holy Spirit is like this, but is also much more. He is not a power or force, something to be discovered or developed from inside us. He is a person, who with the Father and the Son is "worshipped and glorified". He is not to be found in our hearts, but is "sent into our hearts" as St Paul says (Galatians 4:6) so that might receive new life and live as sons of God.

SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are many ways in which the Holy Spirit is portrayed or symbolised. He is living water. He is Fire. He is the Oil of anointing. He is Wind and Breath. He is a dark or a shining cloud which reveals the glory of God. He is the laying on of hands. He is the dove, descending from heaven. Each image, in different ways relates to the work of the Spirit and teaches us about him.

ALWAYS ACTIVE

The Spirit has always been active.

At the very beginning of Creation, as described in Genesis, the breath of God breathes over the water as he creates by his word.

In Moses and the later prophets, those chosen by God speak his words through the inspiration of the Spirit. The prophets also promised there would be a time when the fullness of the Spirit would be given to God's people.

In the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus, the Angel tells Mary that she will conceive "by the power of the Holy Spirit". Jesus often speaks of the Spirit and promises the fullness of the Gift of the Spirit to his followers after his Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

On the day of Pentecost, after Jesus' Ascension into Heaven, the Gift of the Spirit is given to the Apostles as they are in prayer, and they go out to preach and call people to Christ in many different languages. So the promises of prophets are fulfilled, and the Age of Spirit begins.

The Holy Spirit is in action in the sacraments, and also in prayer. He gives us gifts - which can become fruits in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons of the Trinity - One God in Three Persons. The technical language the Church uses is that there is one *Being* (or Substance) of God in Three *Persons*.

There is only One God, and the Spirit draws us into the life of God himself.

FROM THE CATECHISM

What does the Church mean when she confesses "I believe in the Holy Spirit?"

From The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (136):

To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess faith in the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is "worshiped and glorified with the Father and Son". The Spirit is sent into our hearts (Galatians 4:6) so we might receive new life as sons of God.



SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wisdom, Understanding, Right judgement (Counsel), Courage (Fortitude), Knowledge, Reverence (Piety), Wonder and Awe (Fear of the Lord)



TWELVE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-control, Chastity



Doorways to Faith

Sessions are held at 3pm on Sundays in the Newman Room, Downey Street, Hanley and at 4.30pm on Wednesdays in Our Lady's School, Watkin Street, Fenton.

Part One: The Creed

I believe in the Holy Spirit Nov 25 & 28

The Holy Catholic Church Dec 2 & 5

... resurrection of the body Dec 9&12

The Word of God Jan 6 and 9

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Last Week: If Jesus saved people by his death and resurrection and leads them to heaven, what about those who came before Jesus (Moses, Abraham etc) and also those who never heard of him or are good people but follow other religions?

Answer: Following some words in the first letter of St Peter, the Church has always taught that after his death Christ "went down to the dead" (sometimes translated as "hell", but not the hell of punishment) to release them from death. These were those who had lived and died before Christ. They had not heard the Gospel, but their good lives were, in a way, a preparation for the Gospel.

Similarly, the Church teaches that other lives, outside the Church and outside Christianity, may also be "preparation for the Gospel", and those who live good lives, striving to do right, will not be excluded by God from his kingdom.

This does not mean, of course, that all religions are equal. They are not like wandering paths all ending in the same destination - but there are paths (other religions) which are going in the right direction, but are nevertheless incomplete. God in his love and mercy may welcome such travellers into Heaven.

This Week: If the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples at Pentecost, where was he before?

For the answer come along to "Doorways to Faith" are read this leaflet next weekend.

This is is Our Faith is a weekly leaflet to accompany the Doorways to Faith groups which are meeting in the parishes of Fenton and Hanley during the Year of Faith (October 2012 to November 2013). The leaflet is produced only while the groups are meeting - so there are no leaflets during holiday periods.