

Receive the Holy Spirit

You, the Church, and the Holy Spirit

Wednesday 17 November 2021

6:30 PM-8:00 PM

Opening Prayer

Background

“And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” *Luke 11:9-13 NLT*

Since the time of Pentecost as recorded in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit has been God with us, with each of us as individuals and with the Church, the Body of Christ. The Creator is alive within us. Though Jesus has ascended, the Holy Spirit is here comforting us, teaching us, and guiding us. Jesus assured us that She would come to us. She is with us every day, if we are open to Her grace, if we seek Her. There is no greater wonder and privilege than this in all the world.

Every ministry of the church is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit and every accomplishment of our ministries is an indication of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which each of us has.

That is, each one of us has a charism, a spiritual Gift of the Holy Spirit, given for the benefit of the church and the world. A charism is not necessarily an extraordinary power or manifestation as some would claim. Paul has told us clearly in Romans 12

that our charism from the Holy Spirit may be the gift of encouraging others, the gift of teaching, the gift of serving others, the gift of generosity, the gift of leadership, or the gift of kindness. And this list is not a compendium of all charisms. It is essential to acknowledge that these charisms are no less a Gift of the Spirit than the extraordinary Gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 such as performing miracles, prophesy, and speaking in unknown tongues. They are all important Gifts from the same Spirit, given for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

And charisms are not something to not speak of or question as may be the tendency of some mainline Christian leaders and pastors. They are exactly what Paul calls them. Gifts. And they ought to be a source of joy. So, we in the church universal form a charismatic community through the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

The work of the Holy Spirit on Earth is mediated through the lives and work of ordinary Christians dedicated to doing our part to help realize the Kingdom of God. Together, we are known as the church, the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit unites us with one another as the church and with the Head of the Church, Christ Jesus. So, both our corporate and individual efforts on behalf of the Kingdom of God are through the power of the Holy Spirit. She works both through the organized efforts of the church and our individual efforts to contribute to the building of God's Kingdom here on Earth and to prepare for that time when God will bring all things together under his Christ.

When speaking specifically about the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, we think of the Spirit as sanctifying our worship, our fellowship, our discipleship, and our mission. The Holy Spirit enlivens and enriches our worship of God, particularly through the Eucharist, Holy Baptism and prayer. She strengthens our fellowship and love for each other and God. She supports us as we live as disciples of Christ, obeying his teachings and commands, and studying and sharing Holy Scriptures. She guides us as we proclaim the Gospel according to the Great Commission and minister to the needs of all humanity and all creation according to the will of God.

In addition, She promotes the church standing for and working for the truth, confronting the evils of the world, supporting the dignity of all peoples, and speaking out for peace and justice in the world.

As individual members of the Body of Christ, the Holy Spirit not only provides us Gifts and Fruit. She does more when we become her friend.

She guides us throughout our lives. We must pray to her and listen. We must consult the Scriptures under her guidance and also seek wise counsel.

As we become intimate with Her, She will help us strengthen our prayer lives. If our prayer life is weak, She helps us with that weakness and intercedes for us according to God's will.

She will aid us in approaching the Scriptures and help us to understand them. She will show us the joy of studying the Word of God.

She will give us the power to witness, to share the Good News without fear or reservation. This does not mean we become obnoxious, self-righteous, and pushy. Rather, we become excited to share what we have found in God with those who are willing to listen.

She will be our friend. And She does not require that we speak in tongues.

Questions to Consider

1. What is your interpretation of Luke 11:9-13? Have you always had the same interpretation as you have today?
2. This session asserts that the Holy Spirit is "God with us." How do you assess this assertion? If the Holy Spirit is "God with us," what is our relationship with Jesus who assured us that She would come to us?
3. How do you see the ministries of the church? Are they the work of the Holy Spirit? Explain.
4. What do you think about the charisms found in Romans 12 compared to those found in 1 Corinthians 12? What charism can you offer the Body of Christ? Will you share it with the church?
5. What special blessing of the Holy Spirit do we ask for the worship, fellowship, discipleship, and mission of the people of Saint Mary Magdalene?
6. How has this study helped you grow in your knowledge and love of the Holy Spirit?

Closing Prayer