



May 31, 2020

Solemnity of Pentecost

There are many ways the Holy Spirit has been revealed to us throughout the ages. There are many images of the Holy Spirit used in Scripture, each one of these images reveals a unique characteristic of the Holy Spirit. Here are some of those images, reflecting on these as a form of prayer, is this week's reflection from the Pastors Desk.

Breath: The best translation for the term "Spirit" is "Ruah" or breath, air or wind. The Holy Spirit is the "Holy Breath of God." This image is seen in various places in the Scriptures. For example, John 20:22 says that Jesus "breathed on them and said to them, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'" The breath of God or wind of God is seen many places in the Scriptures, as we will see in our next section.

Water: Water signifies the Holy Spirit in that it is poured and cleanses. It is poured at baptism, and the Holy Spirit is subsequently poured in that act. Water also signifies death to sin. This is seen in the story of Noah and the flood as well as in the story of the Red Sea when water destroyed the Egyptian army.

Anointing: The symbol of anointing with oil also signifies an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We see this in several of the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Orders). Also, the prophets were anointed with oil to symbolize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them for their ministry.

Fire: Fire transforms that which it touches. It symbolizes power, energy and transformation. It was "tongues as of fire" that descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost.

Cloud and light: We see these images in the Old and New Testament. Jesus was transfigured in light. Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. It was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night that led the Israelites through the desert. The cloud is a masking and veiling of the presence of the Spirit, and the light is but a small portion of the radiance of the Holy Spirit shining forth.

Seal: To be marked or sealed with God is an action of the Holy Spirit. We say, for example, in Confirmation that there is an indelible character, a spiritual character, a seal, that is impressed upon one's soul. This is a marking of God and a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Hand: The laying on of hands is a sign of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is seen in Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination and the Anointing of the Sick. We also recall that Jesus laid hands on the sick to cure them.

Finger: It was by the "finger" of God that Jesus did many great works. This shows the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus' ministry. It was the finger of God that gave the Ten Commandments. And it is by the finger of God that the Holy Spirit continues to work in our day and age.

Dove: Perhaps this is the most common symbol of the Holy Spirit. The dove was present with Noah at the ark, the dove descended upon Jesus at His baptism. White is a symbol of purity, and its wings give it swiftness and agility to descend from the Heavens.

Characteristics taken from My Catholic Faith: by John Paul Thomas