

Teaching the Faith with CURRENT EVENTS

Our Spiritual Unity in a Time of Crisis

Overview:

Amid the current crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19, it is easy to feel isolated and disconnected from our neighbors, our friends, and even God Himself. This feeling is especially relevant for Catholics today, most of whom are currently unable to receive the Sacraments due to concerns over the spread of the virus.

At a time like this, unprecedented for the Church, it is good to reexamine how we are united as members of the Body of Christ, and how the Church is still uplifting the faithful through her prayer, through the Sacraments, and through the divine gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the fire of God's love, and present to us in every moment, just as Our Lord promised in the Gospel: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-18).

No matter what trials we face, as members of the Body of Christ we can, as St. Paul says, "boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

In this lesson your students will:

- Learn what the *Catechism* proclaims about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.
- Explore the manner in which the Spirit brings unity to Church and the lives of the faithful.
- Discuss what it means to be members of the Body of Christ.
- See that through the Sacrament of Baptism the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us.
- Consider the ways in which the Holy Spirit is at work in the world today, even in the midst of a global crisis.

Resources:

- **The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church**, from *Catholic Faith and Reason.org*, found at the following link: [SophiaOnline.org/TheHolySpirit](https://www.sophiaonline.org/TheHolySpirit).
- **The Fire of Your Love – the Sacred Liturgy**, video found at the following link: [SophiaOnline.org/FireOfYourLove](https://www.sophiaonline.org/FireOfYourLove).

The Unity of the Holy Spirit

- First, have your students read over the Scripture passages in the warm-up activity and either silently or in small groups consider the reflection questions.
- Then, give your students *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nos. 733, 788, 797 & 798, along with the article “**The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church,**” from *Catholic Faith and Reason.org*, found at the following link: SophiaOnline.org/TheHolySpirit.
- Have your students reflect on what they read in the *Catechism* and compare it with what they read in the article using the focus and reflection questions. Encourage them to reflect on the mystery of our spiritual communion as members of the Body of Christ, and what the role of the Holy Spirit is in uniting, guiding, inspiring, protecting, and perfecting us, both as individual members of the Church, and as a catholic (universal) community.
- Have students share their answers with the class or have them write their answers out if they are studying from home.
- To close, have students listen to the hymn *Come Holy Ghost* from the video **The Fire of Your Love – the Sacred Liturgy**, found at the following link: SophiaOnline.org/FireOfYourLove. The hymn begins at 0:01 and ends at 2:33 in the video. Have your students sing along, or follow along, using the lyrics provided in this lesson.

Answer Key

Focus and Reflection Questions

1. *Christ did not leave His disciples to be alone but sent them His Holy Spirit. The Catechism states that by “communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation” (CCC 788).*
2. *The Catechism states that “What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church... all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members. “The Holy Spirit makes the Church “the temple of the living God” (CCC 797). Accept reasoned answers.*
3. *The Holy Spirit builds up the Church “by God's Word ‘which is able to build you up’; by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body; by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by ‘the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts’; by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called ‘charisms’), by which he makes the faithful ‘fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church’” (CCC 798). Accept reasoned answers.*

4. *“It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity.’ Unity is of the essence of the Church: What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same” (CCC 813).*
5. *It is that God is a Trinity, three divine Persons in one God.*
6. *The Holy Spirit forever guards and protects the Deposit of Faith. “[Jesus] goes on to say that **‘the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will instruct you in everything.’** Nothing of what Jesus taught would be lost. It would be preserved first in sacred, oral Tradition and then much of it written down in the New Testament, which is a part with the Old Testament, of sacred writing. Together, flowing from **‘the same divine well spring’** they form the deposit of faith, which with the help of the Holy Spirit, has been preserved in the Catholic Church since the time of Jesus.”*
7. *“The Church has always taught that we receive the Holy Spirit through the sacrament (a sharing in the life of God; an outward sign that produces grace in us) of Baptism. The waters of Baptism signify the cleansing of our soul of original sin [which all humans inherit from Adam and Eve, our first parents]. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, tells us that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit in our baptism. This reality is signified by the holy oil which is traced on the forehead of the person being baptized in the form of a cross. The sacrament imparts an indelible character. God's life comes to us and makes us **‘children of God’** and **‘heirs with Christ.’** St. Peter makes the comparison to the waters which saved Noah from physical death, proclaiming that in the spiritual realm of our soul, **‘baptism now saves you’** (1 Peter 3:21). The Spirit also imparts the gifts of faith, hope and charity, enabling us to grow in our relationship with God and with one another.”*
8. *When the Holy Spirit works in our lives His love bears fruits. These fruits reveal themselves in our actions, words, and dispositions; they are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness and chastity.*
9. *Accept reasoned answers.*
10. *No, it does not. Accept reasoned answers. “The Church is one because of her founder: for ‘the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body.’ The Church is one because of her ‘soul’: ‘It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity.’ Unity is of the essence of the Church: What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her ‘Church’” (CCC 813).*

11. *Accept reasoned answers.*
12. *Accept reasoned answers. In living a life marked by prayer, particularly the prayers of the Church and her liturgies, by receiving the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, by following the daily readings of Mass in our homes, by seeking to aide others and serve Christ by serving the poor, sick, and needy in our lives and communities, by reading Scripture and the lives of the Saints, etc.*

Warm up Activity:

Joel 3:1-2:

It shall come to pass I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh... Even upon your male and female servants, in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

Matthew 28:18-20:

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of 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, until the end of the age.”

John 14:15-18:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

John 14:23:

Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”

Romans 5:3-5

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Reflection Questions:

1. In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is described as being “poured out” into our hearts. Why do you think this imagery is used?
2. Christ said that the “world cannot accept” the Holy Spirit “because it neither sees nor knows it.” What do you think He means by this?

Catechism of the Catholic Church nos. 733, 788, 797 & 798

Directions: First, read the paragraphs from the *Catechism*, followed by the article “**The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church,**” from catholicfaithandreason.org. Then, with your group, discuss and answer the focus and reflection questions.

CCC 788 When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit. As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."

CCC 797 "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church." "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members." The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God": Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted. . . . In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God. . . . For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace.

CCC 798 The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body." He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity: by God's Word "which is able to build you up"; by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body; by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts"; by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."

CCC 813 *The Church is one because of her source:* "the highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit." The Church is one *because of her founder:* for "the Word made flesh, the prince of peace, reconciled all men to God by the cross, . . . restoring the unity of all in one people and one body." The Church is one *because of her "soul":* "It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity." Unity is of the essence of the Church: What an astonishing mystery! There is one Father of the universe, one Logos of the universe, and also one Holy Spirit, everywhere one and the same; there is also one virgin become mother, and I should like to call her "Church."

Focus and Reflection Questions

1. How was communion with Christ intensified when His visible presence was taken from the Disciples?
2. How does the *Catechism* describe the Holy Spirit's relationship with the Church? What do you think it means to say that the Holy Spirit is "the ladder of our ascent to God" (CCC 797)?
3. What are the ways in which the Holy Spirit works to build up the whole Church? Can you think of any other ways the Spirit works in our lives?
4. According to what you read in the *Catechism* how does the Holy Spirit bring about the Church's unity?
5. What does the article *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church* state is the central mystery of the Catholic Faith?
6. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Deposit of Faith?
7. When do we first receive the Holy Spirit in our lives? What is the result of our receiving His Grace?
8. How can we recognize when the Holy Spirit is at work in someone's life?
9. The article tells us that we are "intended to reflect the glory of Christ in our lives by striving for personal holiness, which can only be achieved through God's grace." In light of the current epidemic and its social consequences, what are three concrete ways you can strive for personal holiness?
10. Consider what you read in the *Catechism*. Does not being able to receive the Eucharist during this pandemic mean we are cut off from Christ as members of His Mystical Body? Explain.
11. Given what has been discussed in this lesson, in what new ways do you see the Holy Spirit at work in your life during this trying time? In the lives of your family and friends? In the Holy Church?
12. Though the Blessed Sacrament is temporarily unavailable to most of the faithful because of concerns about the spread of COVID-19, how can we continue to partake in the life of the Church in our daily lives?

Hymn: *Come Holy Ghost*

Directions: Listen to the hymn *Come Holy Ghost* from the video **The Fire of Your Love – the Sacred Liturgy**, found at the following link: [SophiaOnline.org/FireOfYourLove](https://www.sophiaonline.org/FireOfYourLove). The hymn begins at 0:01 and ends at 2:33 in the video. Prayerfully follow along using the lyrics below.

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest, and in our hearts take up Thy rest;
Come with Thy grace and heav'nly aid to fill our hearts which thou hast made,
To fill our hearts which Thou hast made.

O Comforter, to Thee we cry, Thou heav'nly gift of God most high;
Thou fount of life, and fire of love, and sweet anointing from above,
And sweet anointing from above.

Praise we the Lord, Father and Son, and Holy Spirit with Them one;
And may the Son on us bestow all gifts that from the Spirit flow,
All gifts that from the Spirit flow.