

## LESSON 10

# I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU AS ORPHANS

### BACKGROUND READING



The Apostles were courageous men – brave enough to leave all they had and follow Jesus. But their courage would not be enough. When Jesus was arrested, they ran and hid. Peter denied that he even knew Jesus. Only one of the Apostles, St. John, was present at Jesus’ Crucifixion. The Apostles were lost and scattered without their leader.

Jesus knew that all of His disciples would continue to need His guidance after He ascended into Heaven. The evening before He died, Jesus assured them, “I will not leave you orphans” (John 14:18). And the last words that He spoke to His disciples before ascending into Heaven were “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20–). But how could Jesus always be with His disciples? He would send the Holy Spirit.

### Who Is the Holy Spirit?

As we learned in October, the Holy Spirit is the Third Divine Person of the Trinity. From the beginning of Creation, the Spirit has been at work with the Father and the Son. We can see Him in the Old Testament, although He is hidden from our full understanding: the Spirit of God moved over the waters of creation; the

Father breathed the Spirit of God into man and thus gave him life; the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets in the Old Testament.

The Holy Spirit is more fully revealed in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit preserved the Blessed Virgin Mary from all sin and conceived Jesus in Mary’s womb. Throughout His life Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a Life Giver or as a Counselor. The Risen Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto the Apostles as He gave them the power to forgive sin (John 20:21–23). He told the Apostles He would send the Holy Spirit to give them the fortitude they would need to spread the Gospel: “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Jesus’ promise of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled ten days later on the Feast of Pentecost. While they were hiding in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit was poured out on Mary and the Apostles. They were given the spiritual help boldly to proclaim Jesus as Lord. Christ’s Kingdom was open to all who believed in Him, and thousands of people were baptized on that day alone.

## The Holy Spirit and the Church

That feast of Pentecost was the birthday of the Church. The word Church does not simply mean a church building. The term has three inseparable meanings: the liturgical gathering, the local community, and the whole universal community of believers. The Church draws her life from Christ's Body (in the Eucharist), and she herself becomes Christ's Body (CCC 752).

Jesus founded the Church to be the visible sign of His Kingdom on earth and to govern, teach, and sanctify in His name. He gave it a clear structure: the 12 Apostles – representing the 12 tribes of Israel – would be the first bishops, and Peter would be the first pope, or visible head of the Church: “And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19).

Thus, the Church that Jesus founded was to go forth with Jesus' own authority to continue the work that He had come to do. We see this repeated in Jesus' words to His Apostles at the Last Supper: “And I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred one on Me” (Luke 22:29). Jesus was telling His apostles that He was transferring to them His authority and His mission for them to continue, with Peter as their head.

It is in the Church, born in that outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that we know the Spirit's fullness. It is the Spirit who:

- ▶ inspires the Sacred Scriptures
- ▶ preserves the Tradition of the Apostles

- ▶ intercedes for us in prayer
- ▶ empowers and sanctifies us through the Sacraments
- ▶ teaches and protects us through the Magisterium
- ▶ builds up the Church through His gifts and ministries

Jesus Christ willed, founded, and built the Church. The Church is governed by His authority and carries on His mission. It is truly a work of God Himself – not of human origin, but of divine origin.

## The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

The Holy Spirit is the one who first moves in our hearts and reveals to us that Jesus Christ is Lord. He endows us with the gift of faith and brings us, through Baptism, the gift of new life in Christ Jesus. Confirmed Christians receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which build on our natural virtues. We will study these gifts in depth later in this program.

The Apostles received these gifts of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, because – as we can see from their failures on Good Friday – they would need the Holy Spirit in order to live as Jesus' disciples. “I am the vine, you are the branches,” Jesus told His disciples. “Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Jesus went on to say that if the world hated them, they should remember that it had hated Him first (John 15:18). Christian discipleship is demanding, and if we depend on ourselves for the courage and strength required, we will fail. Without Jesus we can do nothing. But with Him, all things are possible.

## LESSON 11

# I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

## BACKGROUND READING



We have learned about how God entered into a series of covenants with His Chosen People. All of these covenants were to prepare them for the new and eternal covenant in Christ's blood. In Christ, God's promises were offered not to a single nation but to the entire human race. The *Catechism* teaches that God "called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit" (CCC 781). The Holy Spirit unites baptized Christians of all races, ethnicities, and walks of life into one People of God:

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:27-29).

### Who Are the People of God?

The People of God are baptized Christians from all over the world who believe in God and follow His commands. We follow Jesus' commandment to love one another as He has

loved us. Our mission is to be Christ in the world and share the Gospel message, and our destiny is the Kingdom of Heaven. To help fulfill this mission and destiny, God has given us each special gifts and talents that He calls us to use in ways unique to us.

Belonging to the People of God is far greater than any ethnic, political, or cultural membership. All baptized Christians are members of the Church and share in Christ's office as priest, prophet, and king. "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own'... Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people." (1 Peter 2:9-10). In other words, Christians make up the Church, or the Body of Christ.

### The Church Is the Body of Christ

The phrase Body of Christ has several meanings. First, it can be a way of referring to the Incarnation – that the Second Person of the Trinity took on a human body that He would offer on the Cross for our sake. Body of Christ also refers to the Eucharist – the Real Presence of Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – under the appearance of bread and wine. The phrase Body of Christ also

refers to the Mystical Body of Christ. Here we understand the word body not only as a human body but as the body of believers united with Christ and with each other.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus spoke of both a spiritual and physical communion between Him and His disciples. “I am the vine, you are the branches,” He said in John 15:5. At the Last Supper, He offered His Body and Blood for the Apostles to eat and drink and commanded the Apostles to celebrate Mass for all Christians. In the Eucharist we participate in the one eternal Holy Mass in Heaven and receive the Body of Christ. Thus we are one body in Christ Jesus.

Not only do we as individuals enter into communion with God Himself and thus become His body, but this union makes every Christian a part of the entire Body of Christ: all the baptized who make up the People of God, spiritually and physically united with Him, and with each other. “We are taken up into communion with Him and with one another” (CCC 790).

### **The Church Teaches, Sanctifies, and Governs**

The *Catechism* teaches that “to the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power” (873).

- ▶ To teach means to preach the Gospel and to preserve the purity of the Faith handed down from the Apostles. We call the knowledge Jesus gave to the Apostles the Deposit of Faith. The Apostles’ mission was to go forth and proclaim all that Jesus had taught them and to guard and hand on this Deposit of Faith. Today the Church continues

to teach and guard these truths just as Jesus commanded. In 1 Timothy 3:15 we read of God’s intention to make the Church the upholder or guardian of the truth: “The Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

- ▶ To sanctify means to make holy. In order to continue to offer the graces necessary for salvation, Jesus instituted Seven Sacraments (including one we have learned about this year: Baptism) as the chief means of dispensing His grace. He gave the Apostles – the first bishops – the power and duty to dispense the Sacraments, and thus to offer everyone the graces necessary for holiness and salvation. The Apostles, in turn, passed this power and duty on to men called to the priesthood. Only ordained priests have received this power from Christ, as passed on in an unbroken line. In Volume Two we will study the Seven Sacraments in greater detail.
- ▶ To govern means to lead through service. Jesus empowered His Apostles to govern. He told St. Peter, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven” (Matthew 16:19). While on earth Jesus chose 12 men to lead through service. He placed one, St. Peter, as head of them all. This basic structure of the Church continues today. The bishops are the successors of the Apostles, and the pope is the successor of St. Peter. The sacred power that the pope, bishops, and all priests have is not their own; it is Christ’s. That is why we can look to

these leaders with trust and obedience. Christ continues to govern through them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can rejoice that Christ did not leave us as orphans. He ascended into Heaven, but His

spiritual presence with us is, in a way, even more powerful: He binds up and calls together people from all over the world to make them one in the Church. Christ is the Head of the Body, and the Holy Spirit is its soul.