

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

Intro

- I. **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit**
- II. **What the Church Is**
- III. **What the Church Does**

Intro

- We saw in our first session that the Trinity is the central mystery of our faith
 1. Everything God does, He does as a Trinity. So that All God's work takes on certain Trinitarian characteristics
 2. In fact, History itself is Trinitarian
 3. Notice how in the Creed, we begin by talking about the Father and His work, then the Son and His work, then the Holy Spirit and *His* work.
(Of course, the Trinity works together on everything, but there's a way that each Person is emphasized through different phases of God's saving plan).
- So which person is emphasized at which stage of God's work for us?
 1. Well, the work of the **Father**, "The Creator of Heaven and Earth," is emphasized in the Old Testament
 2. Then the work of the **Son**, which we go over in the second part of the Creed, is emphasized in the Gospel period.
 3. Finally, beginning with Pentecost, we see an emphasis on the work of the **Holy Spirit**
- But when we talk about the Holy Spirit's work in this third phase of salvation, we have to talk about two things:
 1. The Holy Spirit's *invisible* work in the human soul
 2. The Holy Spirit's *visible* work in the institution of the Catholic Church

So let's get to know the Holy Spirit and His Church

- I. **The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit**

- a. The Holy Spirit in History¹
 - i. The Holy Spirit is revealed throughout the Old and New Testaments
 1. Of course, from eternity, the Holy Spirit is with the Father and the Son in the Blessed Trinity
 - ii. But we recognize Him at work in the Old Testament...
 1. For example: moving over the waters at creation; entering the souls of the first man and woman; and speaking through the prophets
 - iii. and in the New Testament
 1. For example: overshadowing Our Lady when she conceived Christ; being breathed on the apostles after the Resurrection; coming upon the Church at Pentecost

- b. The Holy Spirit in our souls²
 - i. The Holy Spirit is the one who internally prompts us:
 - First, to *recognize* Jesus as Lord
 - Secondly, to *follow* Jesus in all things
 - ii. It is the Holy Spirit who dwells within us when we are in the state of sanctifying grace
 - Only by His presence and power are we able to live as we ought.
 - iii. Many people may feel as though they don't know the Spirit – but that's because He's too close to see. He's the one we owe all our merits and virtues too, and it is He who makes our **being** holy (by Baptism) and our **action** holy (by Confirmation).

- c. The Holy Spirit in the Church³
 - i. But it wouldn't be enough if the Holy Spirit were simply an invisible force. God knows we need to use our bodies to enter into a relationship with anyone, including Him.
 - So by the power of the Holy Spirit, He has given us a visible Church
 - ii. This Church includes tangible things like Official Church teaching, the Holy Bible, the Blessed Sacraments –
 - So we can hear God's directions through our human ears, read God's word with our human eyes, and touch God Himself in the sacraments
 - And it is the Holy Spirit, who is the **soul of the Church**, who preserves and sanctifies these heavenly gifts

II. What the Church is⁴

¹ The textual support for this material is found in Chapter 10, "**Who Is the Holy Spirit?**"

² The textual support for this material is found in Chapter 10, "**The Holy Spirit in Our Lives**"

³ The textual support for this material is found in Chapter 10, "**The Holy Spirit and the Church**"

⁴ The textual support for this material is found in Chapter 11, "**Who are the People of God?**" "**The Church is the Body of Christ**"

- a. The Church is the **community of the faithful**, which includes both the laity and the hierarchy
 - i. Never in salvation history did God deal merely with an isolated individual (think how misguided was Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?")
 - ii. We pursue our eternal destiny together, as a family, and that family is the Church.

- b. Now, very importantly, the Church is a **Mystical Body**
 - i. Paul, over and over, calls the Church "the Body of Christ"
 - As we just saw, the **invisible soul** of the Church is **the Holy Spirit**
 - And the **head** of the Church is **Christ**
 - ii. But if the Church is Christ's body, then that has some major implications
 - First of all, a body is *visible* (by definition, a body is something material, something tangible). So the Church can't just be an "invisible community of all believers." It has to be a concrete institution.
 - Secondly, a body is *organized* (a body, after all, has *organs*, and all the parts of the body are precisely coordinated to work together). So it doesn't make sense for a Christian to say, "I don't believe in organized religion."
 - Thirdly, a body is how you relate to a person. A man can't say to his wife, "I want to have a relationship with you, but I don't want your body to get in the way. I don't want to see, or touch, or hear your body." So too, if the Church is Christ's body, it doesn't make sense to say, "I want a relationship with Christ, but I don't want the Church to get in the way." The Church is precisely *how* you have a relationship with Christ.

- c. Finally, it is the Church (the Mystical Body of Christ) who gives us the most intimate access to God through the Eucharist (which is the Sacramental Body of Christ).
 - i. These two ways of Christ being present complement each other and depend on each other
 - So it's a great mistake to emphasize the Eucharist without the Church, or the Church without the Eucharist
 - Christ's Body is Christ's Body – and it's how we come to Him

III. What does the Church do?

- a. The Church is the community of believers, but every community needs leadership

- i. That's why Jesus gave us Peter and the Apostles, and they in turn appointed successors (the popes and the bishops), to direct the Church until Christ should come again

- b. Under this leadership of the Pope and Bishops, the Church fulfills three tasks
 - i. The Church **teaches**
 - The Church keeps safe the truths of revelation
 - The teaching authority of the Church makes sure that our faith is never corrupted, never contradicts itself, and never invents a new teaching that isn't based on the original witness of Scripture and the Apostles
 - Have you ever wondered how it is that official Church teaching hasn't contradicted itself in the course of two thousand years? Or why the "telephone effect" hasn't made us believe totally different things from the first Christians?
 - It's because the Holy Spirit has safeguarded the Church's power to teach

 - ii. The Church **sanctifies**
 - It is by the power of the apostles and their successors that we have the Seven Sacraments, which God uses to make His people Holy
 - It's the unbroken chain of ordination from the first apostles down to today's popes, bishops, priests, and deacons, that makes us confident that the miraculous power of the sacraments endures

 - iii. The Church **governs**
 - Christ appointed the apostles as *shepherds*, to lead the sheep – and gave them His power of binding and loosing (especially Peter in Matthew 16:19).
 - Christ is, as we saw, Head of the Church, and He continues to lead His people through the authority of His apostles today.

What a blessing to have Christ Himself teaching us, making us holy, and giving us direction, through His Sacred Body, the Church!