

THE NEW LIFE

The Holy Spirit

'I came so that they may have life and have it in abundance.'

(John 10:10)

Life in the Spirit Seminars Week 3 Throughout the ages, the prophets predicted that the day would come when God would give his Spirit freely to men. Yet, all of humanity was stuck in bondage to sin. It was prophesied that those who would turned (repent) to him and received his Spirit would be changed. They would receive New Life. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17).

We remember this event in the third glorious mystery of the Rosary, "The Descent of the Holy Spirit." Jesus' promise to fulfill that prediction happened on Pentecost when the disciples were gathered together in prayer and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of tongues of fire. They began to prophesy, teach, and heal the sick; they prayed in tongues and proclaimed the Good News boldly to many nations. That very day thousands of Jews became believers in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Was Pentecost only a historical moment? Was it just a story made up by a few crazies? Why are we here today? Why do we pray? Why do we worship Jesus at Ablaze? The power of Pentecost continues to be operative today! Let us not limit God by our inability to understand this great Mystery. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We received the same Holy Spirit in our Baptism and His presence in us was strengthened in Confirmation. Be silent for a moment to greet Him within you! Try it!

We are Baptized and Confirmed in order to live the Eucharist... to become extensions of the Incarnation! For most people, however, the fullness of the Holy Spirit's action in our lives is still awaiting our invitation. Have you ever pondered the questions: How do I allow the

Holy Spirit to be more fully released in my life? We pray, Lord I want to immerse my life more fully into your Divine Life. Like St. Paul, I want to be able to say, "It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:19-20).

What an amazing gift it is to be baptized? Something very special happened to our soul at Baptism. He lives in you! The angels continue to stand in awe of God's presence in us because of our baptism. In that sacred moment, everything Jesus Christ did is applied to our souls... the merits of his life, death, and resurrection! It's purely God's favour to give us this Gift of his life and to call us his sons and daughters. This divine life of grace which began at baptism has made us fit to worship at Mass where we, as members of the mystical body, enter into the perfect prayer of Jesus Christ. Lord, make us spiritually aware of this New Life in the Spirit.

We can experience the Holy Spirit in the same way the first disciples did. And when the Holy Spirit is released more fully in us, we will begin to experience a new kind of life. We get to know God in a new way and we become changed people. Then, as we continue to grow in faith, we want to reach out and serve others. God equips us with the spiritual gifts we need to do His work. Jesus told us, "I have come that you may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). This abundant life is not only a promise of spending eternity with God in heaven but a new life here and now. We receive it by yielding to God to have Him more active in our lives. Our daily readings this week will reveal the extent of this promise. Rest in the Truth that God desires union with you and he lives in you.

Reading Assignments Ezekiel 36:22-28 John's Gospel 14:15-18 Acts 2:1-14

Acts 19:5-7 Galatians 5:16-23 1 Corinth 12:4-11 Ephesians 2:19-22 Revelation 22:17

CCC =Catechism of the Catholic Church. If you don't have a copy you can look these references up in Google.

CCC 1287 CCC 729 CCC 696 CCC 1288 CCC 736 CCC 801 CCC 756
CCC 668-670

Words of Life

Day 1:

Throughout the ages, prophets predicted that the day would come when God would give his Spirit freely to men. Those who turned to him and received his Spirit would be changed. They would be new men with a new life.

'The Lord God says this, 'I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you. You shall be my people and I will be your God.'

(Ezek 36: 22-28)

Day 2:

Jesus promised before he died that he would give his followers the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will live in you and give you a new life. The promise of Jesus is for everyone. Jesus says:

'If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you. I will not leave you orphans.'

(Jn. 14: 15-18)

Day 3:

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples were gathered together in one room in prayer, and the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised came on them. From that moment on, they were changed men.

'When Pentecost day came round, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.'

(Acts 2: 1-4)

Day 4:

You can experience the Holy Spirit the same way the first disciples did. Whether you have been a Christian for a while or have never believed in Christ before, you can receive whatever is missing in your experience of the life of the Spirit. What happened to the disciples at Ephesus can happen to you.

'When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, and the moment Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy. They were about twelve of these men.'

(Acts 19: 5-7)

Day 5:

When the Holy Spirit is released in you, you will begin to experience a new kind of life. You will know God in a new way. That new life will grow in you until you become a changed person. Paul describes the result by saying:

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'

(Gal. 5: 22-23)

Day 6:

As you grow in faith in the Holy Spirit in you, you will begin to experience him working in you in new ways so that you can serve others. He will equip you with spiritual gifts, gifts which will give you a new power to do his work. Paul talks about some of these gifts in this way:

'The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the word of wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the word of knowledge given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit: another again the gift of healing through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another, prophecy; another the gift of discerning spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.'

(1 Cor. 12: 7-11)

Day 7:

God gives the Holy Spirit so that we can be joined to the body of Christ (the Church, the Christian community). The new life in the Spirit will allow you to be more closely united with other Christians in the Church and to experience a communion with them in the Spirit. God's word teaches:

'So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's chosen household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit.'

(Eph. 2: 19-22)

Study

This week the two chapters we will read are about turning to the Lord in faith and repentance. **John 4, Acts 13.**

Let the grace of your Baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23). When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: 'Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better'. In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God's love, 'like a bride bedecked with jewels' (Is 61:10).

Testimonies

1. I am a Chartered Accountant and trainer and I start every course with the same words: "I was born an Accountant and I believe in cost/benefit analysis for everything: eating, sleeping, breathing, training courses...". It's an attitude which God changed dramatically when He became the centre of my life.

I grew up in a Catholic family, was confirmed at age 11, went to a Catholic school and effectively left the Church at age 14 because God was irrelevant to me. I got married in a Catholic Church because my family expected me to. When I started taking my daughter to the Catholic primary school I felt it would be hypocritical not to take her to Mass. After six years of irregular Mass attendance I volunteered, so I thought, to read at Mass and become a Eucharistic Minister. A job I took seriously but not spiritually. My faith was limited to a grudging one hour a week.

One day I was asked to do a life in the spirit seminar and much as I would have gone on a tax planning course. I soon realised that the course was about Jesus, whom I had never thought of as a real person before. The revelation that He had died for me was mind-blowing. On the 5th week I was prayed with for the first time in my life. To experience God's love in the quiet words spoken to me was a life-changing experience. My priorities have been transformed, making money is no longer my reason for living."

2. I enjoyed boarding school. I did everything that good girls do. I went to daily Mass and also attended with the nuns when they were praying the Office etc. I remember only once breaking the rules by getting in an open window! I got caught but don't remember the penalty! After school I continued going to Mass on Sundays, but as time went on I married, reared my family, but eventually only went to Mass just in case the neighbours might be talking. I took my children to Mass but unfortunately didn't do an awful lot more. I was living in the Midlands at this time. As the years moved on I joined a group where God was mentioned—"Let go and let God lead me and guide me". In this group there was an un-married mother whom I looked down on until I heard her say one day that she spent an hour weekly in the Adoration Chapel where there was Perpetual Adoration. I was very impressed. My perception of that girl changed and something led me to finding out where the Chapel of Adoration was. I visited the Chapel and soon I was a daily visitor. After sometime I felt I was searching. I did not know what I was searching for.

One day a fellow adorer whom I knew just to see spoke to me and invited me to do a Life in the Spirit Seminar. She told me that she belonged to a Charismatic Prayer Group and suggested I meet up with two of the leaders – for a chat. This I did and in the course of a prayerful session one of them got the following word for me from the Lord – “I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for” They suggested that I attended the Friary Prayer Meeting. I went along the following week and loved it. The singing was wonderful, the fellowship was lovely, but tongues was mighty peculiar. The leader each night read a piece of Scripture and talked about it which I found interesting. However, I myself didn't know the inside from the outside of a Bible. One evening it was the turn of a retired primary school teacher to lead the meeting. One thing she told us was that when she first joined the prayer group she didn't know anything about the Bible either, nor understand it. This was a revelation to me, so I wasn't the only one who

didn't know the Bible. I listened to Scripture being shared, and heard the Holy Spirit being talked about. I attended the Life in the Spirit Seminars, was Baptised in the Spirit, got the gift of Tongues and little by little I began to understand bits of the Bible unknown to me the Holy Spirit was opening up Scripture for me bit by bit.

Today I love the Holy Spirit. Sometimes he tells me what to do, sometimes He corrects me, and sometimes He speaks to me (not in a voice like yours and mine, but in an inner voice).