

Living in Christ

The Church

Christ in the World Today

Martin C. Albl

with Christine Schmertz Navarro and Joanna Dailey



saint mary's press

The Subcommittee on the Catechism, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has found that this catechetical high school text, copyright 2011, is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and that it fulfills the requirements of Course IV: “Jesus Christ’s Mission Continues in the Church” of the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*.

Nihil Obstat: Rev. William M. Becker, STD
Censor Librorum
October 1, 2010

Imprimatur: †Most Rev. John M. Quinn, DD
Bishop of Winona
October 1, 2010

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The publishing team included Maura Thompson Hagarty, PhD, theological reviewer; Christine Schmertz Navarro, development editor with Steven McGlaun and Brian Singer-Towns; Joanna Dailey, section 4 sidebar and section 5 author; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary’s Press.

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Printed in the United States of America

1149 (PO5489)

ISBN 978-1-59982-060-6, Print

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

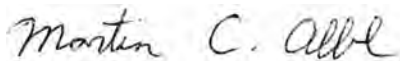
You are about to begin your study of the Church. In many ways studying this subject will be similar to studying any other subject: you will learn new vocabulary, become familiar with some famous people in the Church, and be introduced to some new concepts and ways of thinking.

But in other ways, this study will be unique, because the subject matter is unique. The Church is unlike any other reality on earth, because she is both within history and beyond it. She is both human and divine. In the Church we meet God.

This study will engage not only your brain but also your heart and your spirit—in other words, your whole self. You will be challenged mentally to understand teachings about the nature of the Church and gain a sense of how she has been present in the world throughout history. You also will be challenged in other ways—challenged to pray more deeply with the Church and challenged to become a more committed and active member of the Church. After all, you are a holistic person, made up of body, mind, and spirit. This study will challenge you to broaden and deepen all aspects of yourself.

In writing this book, the editors and I have expanded our knowledge about the Church, have thought in new ways about the Church, and have grown in our own commitment to and love for her. I invite you to share in that experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin C. Alle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Section 1

The Church

**Christ's Continued
Presence and Work
in the World**

The Origin of the Church

As you begin your study of the Church, it makes sense to address questions about where the Church came from and who founded it. The Church was always part of the Father's plan. It was instituted by his Son, Jesus Christ, and is given life by the Holy Spirit.

The word *Church* refers to the assembly of people whom God calls together to be in a special relationship with him. The Church was part of God's saving plan from all eternity. It is both the means of salvation and the goal of his plan. All people who are saved will be gathered into the perfected Church at the end of time.

God formed a special relationship with Israel as his Chosen People, which foreshadowed his subsequent relationship with the Church. God's covenants with Israel prepared for the New Covenant established through Jesus' death and Resurrection.

Jesus' gift of the Eucharist and his saving death on the cross gave birth to the Church. Jesus inaugurated the Church by preaching about the Kingdom of God, healing people in mind and body, and calling people to be part of his family. Jesus also established a structure for the Church, based on the Twelve Apostles' and Peter's leadership. This structure will last until the fulfillment of the Kingdom.

The topics covered in this part are:

- Article 1: "The Meaning of Church" (page 10)
- Article 2: "God's Call to Israel Foreshadows the Church" (page 13)
- Article 3: "Christ Instituted the Church" (page 15)

Article

1 The Meaning of Church

Let's begin by clarifying the meaning of the word *church*. In the everyday English language, the word *church* can refer to different realities, such as a building (“the big church downtown”), a parish (“I’m a member of Saint Mary’s Church”), a Christian ecclesial community (“the Lutheran Church”), and the Catholic Church. To understand how these are related, it is helpful to see how the earliest Christians understood and used this word.

Defining Church

The New Testament Greek word translated as *church* is *ekklesia*. It is related to the Greek verb *ek-ka-lein*, “to call out,” and thus refers to the convocation or assembly of people whom God calls together to be in a special relationship with him. In the Greek Old Testament, *ekklesia* is used to refer to the people of Israel, an assembly chosen by God. The first Christians applied the term *ekklesia* to themselves to show that they were heirs of the assembly of Israel. In the Church, God calls people together from all over the earth.

The word *Church* has three meanings in Christian usage, all of which involve God’s call:

- the entire community of God’s People around the world

The hierarchy of bishops and cardinals come from a wide range of nationalities, ethnicities, and backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the Church.

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- the local community, which is a **diocese** or archdiocese, such as the Archdiocese of Chicago
- the community assembled for **liturgy**, especially the Mass (for example, the people gathered at Saint Charles Borromeo Parish to celebrate the Eucharist at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday)

It is impossible to separate these meanings from one another. The Church is all the people God gathers in the world, but she exists concretely in local communities and is made real in the assembly that gathers for liturgy, especially to celebrate the Eucharist. “She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ’s Body” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, [CCC], 752).

The Father Planned the Church from the Beginning

Calling together human beings is central to the Father’s plan of salvation, as he wishes to gather us as his own people, the People of God, in order to save us. Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who is himself fully God, established the Church when he proclaimed and ushered in the Kingdom of God.

Even before the Church was instituted, the Father’s eternal plan of calling together a holy people had already been taking shape in history. The Father’s call to the people



diocese

Also known as a “particular” or “local” Church, the regional community of believers, who commonly gather in parishes, under the leadership of a bishop. At times, a diocese is determined not on the basis of geography but on the basis of language or rite.

liturgy

The Church’s official, public, communal prayer. It is God’s work, in which the People of God participate. The Church’s most important liturgy is the Eucharist, or the Mass.

Live It!

Living the Three Meanings of Church

You have many opportunities to live out each of the three meanings of the word Church in different ways:

1. Develop a better sense of the universal nature of the Church by learning about Catholic customs in other countries or praying for Catholics in other nations, especially those suffering persecution. You might also have an opportunity to attend World Youth Day.
2. Get involved with your local diocese. Attend diocesan events for teens. If your diocese has a youth board, consider serving as a member.
3. Participate fully in the liturgy at your parish. You may have opportunities to serve in special roles, such as singing in the choir or lecturing.



How does celebrating the Eucharist in our local parish reflect the three meanings of the word *Church*?

of Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with him was the clearest preparation for the Church. God desires that the whole human race, rather than simply one people, may come together as one People of God. Thus from all eternity, God planned to form a Church as a means of fulfilling that plan. †

God Created the Earth for the Church

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is an ancient Christian writing dating from the second century. The first part records a series of visions given to Hermas, a Christian slave. In one, he sees an old woman carrying a book that reveals future events and the secrets of people's hearts. Later, in a dream, a young man tells Hermas that the old woman is the Church. Hermas wonders why she is old, and is told: "Because she was created first of all, for this reason she is old. And for her sake the world was made" (*Visions* 2.4).

Article

2 God's Call to Israel Foreshadows the Church

Have you ever wondered why more than half of the Bible is composed of books that were written before the time of Christ? The reason is that the Old Testament still has enormous value. Together with the New Testament, it hands on God's Revelation and makes known to us his plan of salvation. The Old Testament records the history of salvation from Creation through God's Covenant with the Israelites, which foreshadows and prepares for the Church.

God's Covenants with Israel

The community of Israel **foreshadows** the Church. Just as God chooses us to be saved as part of the Church, so too did God call Israel as a nation to be his Chosen People as part of his larger plan of salvation.

God called Abraham to leave his own country, promising him that he would father a great nation, Israel (see Genesis 12:2). Later God made a covenant with him, promising him land for himself and his descendants (see 12:15). Still later God entered into the Sinai Covenant. As the people's part of the Covenant, God gave them his Law through Moses at Mount Sinai. The Law is summarized in the Ten



foreshadow

To represent or prefigure a person before his or her life or an event before it occurs.



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When the Israelites turned away from God, Moses interceded with God on their behalf. How does this foreshadow Jesus' role as our Savior?

Commandments. Through the covenants, God established a special relationship with Israel as his Holy People.

Universal Implications of God's Call to Israel

God's special relationship with Israel was not just about Israel: it had a deeper meaning for the rest of the world as well. The prophets proclaimed a future when all nations would gather together with Israel in true worship (see Isaiah 2:2–5, Micah 4:1–4). The gathering of the people of Israel foreshadows the future gathering of all nations into one People of God.

The Israelites, however, could not fulfill and were not always faithful to their Covenant with God, straying away to worship other gods, for example. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of God's plan for a New Covenant between God and his People (see Jeremiah 31:31–34).

The perfect fulfillment of the Sinai Covenant, of the Law, is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. As a Jew he was born under the Law, but by taking the people's sins upon himself, he transformed the Law engraved on stone and engraved it upon his own heart. He is then the "covenant of the people" (Isaiah 42:6), God's Servant who brings justice. In fulfilling the Law of Sinai, however, Jesus did not abolish it. Instead he revealed its true meaning. Jesus thus initiated the New Covenant at the Last Supper: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you" (Luke 22:20). †

Old Testament Images of the Church

In describing herself, the Church often draws on Old Testament images. Israel is pictured as God's flock of sheep (see Psalm 77:20). Jesus refers to his followers as his "little flock" (Luke 12:32). Isaiah compares Israel to a vineyard (see chapter 5). Jesus calls his disciples the branches of the vine (see John 15:5).

Christians often compare the Church to Israel's Temple. They call themselves "living stones" who form a "spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). Their community is "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16) with Christ as the cornerstone (see 1 Peter 2:7, Matthew 21:42).

Another image, dear to the Church Fathers, is the prefiguring of the Church in Noah's ark. The ark saves from flood waters, while the Church saves from sin.

Article

3 Christ Instituted the Church

When you think of people instituting an organization or corporation, you may think of a ceremony or of men and women dressed in business suits and hard hats using shovels to dig up the first dirt. Jesus did not institute the Church in this way. This article explores how Jesus instituted the Church.

Jesus Preached the Kingdom of God

At the time appointed by God, Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, became man and lived among us on earth. He took on a human nature without losing his divine nature. The mystery of the union of the divine and human natures in one Divine Person is called the Incarnation.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus inaugurated the Church through his preaching: “This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15; see also CCC, 763). Jesus was drawing on the hope announced by the Old Testament prophets, who looked forward to a coming age when God’s will would be done on earth: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, / the ears of the deaf be cleared” (Isaiah 35:5).

Catholic Wisdom

Vatican II Teaching on the Church’s Relation to the Jewish People

The Vatican II document *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965), affirms that God loves the Jewish people and decries all oppression of Jews. Many Jews have suffered unjust treatment because the sins of the Jews involved in Jesus’ death were wrongly extended to include all Jewish people, even those in different times and places.

Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle. . . . Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures.

(*Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, 4)

Jesus' message was intended for all people. Yet in a special way, Jesus directed his message to the poor and proclaimed that the nations would be judged on how well they took care of people who were hungry and thirsty (see Matthew 25:31–46). Jesus also directed his message toward sinners, calling them to repentance and assuring them of the Father's great mercy. Jesus' message often took the form of parables, which challenged listeners to make the radical choice whether to truly follow him.

Jesus' listeners learned about the Kingdom not only from his words but also from his actions. Jesus' miracles and his healing of the sick were signs that the Kingdom had already begun on earth.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus preached the Kingdom of God. How does the Gospel message continue to be taught today?

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Jesus Sent Disciples

To help him establish the Kingdom of God, the Father gathered people to become Jesus' first followers. Jesus sent out these disciples to preach the Kingdom and to make disciples



of the nations, calling all people to join Christ's Church. This group of followers, his disciples, became the Church, Jesus' true family, and the seed and beginning of the Kingdom on earth. The Church is thus a sign, as well as the actual beginning, of that perfect peace and happiness that all of us desire: the Reign of God mysteriously present in the world.

Jesus Gave Himself Fully for the Church

Jesus established the Church primarily by the saving gift of himself. This gift, which was fulfilled on the cross, was anticipated when Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Jesus' words, "This is my body . . ." (Luke 22:19), expressed his complete self-giving in handing over his life for the sake of humanity. By participating in the Eucharist today, we share, in a mystical way, in Christ's sacrifice, and also in the grace that his sacrifice gives the Church. This Sacrament also increases the unity of the People of God and enables us to share in the divine life.

Pray It!

Praying the Psalms

Jews and Christians continue to share the custom of praying the Psalms. Pray with the following excerpt, especially at times when you may struggle with your self-worth:

You formed my inmost being;
 you knit me in my mother's womb.
 I praise you, so wonderfully you made me;
 wonderful are your works!
 My very self you knew;
 my bones were not hidden from you,
 When I was being made in secret,
 fashioned as in the depths of the earth.
 Your eyes foresaw my actions;
 in your book all are written down;
 my days were shaped, before one came to be.

(Psalm 139:13–16)

Jesus Created the Structure of the Church

hierarchy

In general, the line of authority in the Church; more narrowly the Pope and the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, in their authoritative roles as leaders of the Church.

Have you ever wondered why the Church is governed by a pope and bishops? Jesus set up this structure himself. He appointed the Twelve Apostles as the leaders of the community gathered around him (see Mark 3:14–19), and he gave Peter a special role as the head (see Matthew 16:18–19, Luke 22:31).

In order to build the Church and to proclaim the faith, Christ sent out his Apostles, giving them a share in his own mission. He gave them, and those who have succeeded them, the power to act in his place. The bishops are the Apostles' successors, and the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the successor of Peter. The structure and **hierarchy** of the Church established by Christ continues to this day and will remain until the Kingdom is fully established at the end of time.

Whom Does Jesus Call?

When Jesus gathered followers to help him proclaim and establish the Kingdom, he did not call the most talented and powerful; rather, he chose ordinary fishermen (see Mark 1:16–20) and even a tax collector (see 2:13–17)—a person despised by most Israelites. Jesus' choices are consistent with Paul's reminder that "God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27). God's call comes to everyone, even (or perhaps especially) to those who think they may not be worthy.



Jesus' choice of Twelve Apostles reflects the Twelve Tribes of Israel, God's Chosen People. This aspect of Jesus' inauguration of the Church recalls the Jewish hope that someday the Twelve Tribes, scattered in exile, would be gathered together again. †

Part Review

1. What are three meanings of the word *Church* in Christian usage?
2. What is the Church's role in the Father's plan to save us?
3. Why was God's Covenant with Israel significant for the rest of the world?
4. How is Jesus the perfect fulfillment of the Sinai Covenant?
5. How did Jesus establish the Church through his preaching?
6. How is Jesus' self-giving on the cross related to his establishment of the Church?

Part 2

The Holy Spirit and the Church

In this section we study the Holy Spirit's action in the Church. The first article introduces the Holy Spirit, the Third Divine Person of the Holy Trinity. We see that although the Holy Spirit is revealed throughout the Scriptures, he was not fully revealed until Pentecost, after Jesus had died, risen from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. The Holy Spirit and Christ are inseparable in their mission.

We then look at the actual account of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles and see how Christ poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church that day. Subsequently, we look at the significance of Pentecost as the Revelation of the Church, the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity.

We consider the ways the Holy Spirit animates, sanctifies, and builds the Church. We learn what Saint Paul means when he describes a new kind of life according to the Holy Spirit. A life according to the Holy Spirit is full of love and joy instead of selfishness, conflict, and a blind focus on short-term pleasure. The Holy Spirit's role in this new life includes teaching us to pray.

We conclude this part by learning about special gifts from the Holy Spirit, known as charisms. These include extraordinary gifts, such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healing, but also more ordinary gifts, such as leadership and teaching.

The topics covered in this part are:

- Article 4: "Introducing the Holy Spirit" (page 21)
- Article 5: "Pentecost: The Church Revealed to the World" (page 23)
- Article 6: "The Meaning of Pentecost" (page 25)
- Article 7: "The Holy Spirit Animates, Sanctifies, and Builds the Church" (page 27)
- Article 8: "Life according to the Holy Spirit" (page 30)
- Article 9: "The Holy Spirit Gifts the Church" (page 32)

Article 4 Introducing the Holy Spirit

Because you are familiar with the Old Testament and the Gospels, you have had the opportunity to get to know the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Third Divine Person in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit first appears in the Scriptures in the Book of Genesis, in the first account of Creation. Here, the Holy Spirit is present in the form of a mighty wind that sweeps over the waters (see Genesis 1:2). Throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is present and participates with the Father and the Son in the work of salvation. However, the Holy Spirit's greatest participation in the work of salvation can be witnessed in the New Testament, beginning with the Incarnation (see Luke 1:27–35). The Holy Spirit is fully revealed at Pentecost, when he descended upon the Apostles, with Mary present among them (see Acts 2:1–4).

The Holy Spirit and Christ

Although the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ have possessed a common mission since the beginning of time, the Holy Spirit was fully revealed to us when he was poured out on the Church by Jesus at Pentecost. Jesus did refer to the Holy Spirit in his conversations with his Apostles and in some more public settings but did not fully reveal the Holy Spirit until after his death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

The mission of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are conjoined and inseparable. Whenever God sends his Son, he also sends his Spirit, so when we recite the Nicene Creed, we should see all of Jesus' actions in the second section as a joint mission with the Holy Spirit.

Two symbols of the Holy Spirit are a dove and fire. What might these symbolize about the Holy Spirit?

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The Holy Spirit's Mission

Although Revelation and salvation are the common work of the three Divine Persons, the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of the Church's mission. Over time the Holy Spirit reveals the mission of Christ. The Church continues Christ's path, and because he shared the Good News with the poor, the Church must also do so. Following Christ means sharing in his poverty, obedience, service, and self-sacrifice, and even in his willingness to sacrifice his life.

Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

In 1893 the order of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate was established in Texas. This was one of the first communities of religious women established in that state. One Sunday Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy heard a letter from the bishops of the United States asking people to reach out to African American people who did not have many opportunities for an education.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, she discerned that she was called to serve and educate African American children who were poor. She built a church and a small schoolhouse, named Saint Peter Claver Academy. When she had trouble recruiting volunteers, she, with the help of the local bishop, established a religious community. She gathered a group of young women who dedicated their lives to serving those living in poverty.

After Saint Peter Claver Academy closed in 1971, the sisters established the Healy-Murphy Center, an alternative school for young people at risk, such as teenage mothers and those who have not been successful in traditional high school settings. The sisters also opened day care centers for the teens' children.

In addition to their work at the Healy-Murphy Center, the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate now minister in seven dioceses in Texas, five in Louisiana, two in Mississippi, and one in Mexico.

(This material is taken from the Web site for the Healy-Murphy Center.)



Where does the Holy Spirit lead the Church? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church carries out its mission to bring all people into union with the Trinity. Because people live in harmony with one another only when they are in union with God, the Church is also a means of creating unity among human beings. This unity has begun, but it will not be complete until sometime in the future. The Church is a sign and instrument of the full realization of this unity, that final and eternal perfection in which people will truly be one in union with the Trinity.

An important step in this mission occurred when the Holy Spirit revealed the Church to the world. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles and other disciples to share the Good News with Jews and Gentiles.†

Article 5 Pentecost: The Church Revealed to the World

It seems that whenever we pick up a newspaper, watch the news on television, or surf the Internet, we hear reports of violent conflicts. However, God made human beings to live in harmony with him and with one another. The Church, revealed on **Pentecost**, is a means to this **communion**.

The Day of Pentecost

After Jesus' Ascension his followers gathered together in Jerusalem (see Acts of the Apostles 1:15) at the time of the Feast of Weeks, the Jewish festival also known as Pentecost, which is Greek for "fiftieth," as it was celebrated fifty days after Passover.

The account in the Acts of the Apostles tells us that suddenly a noise like a strong, driving wind filled the house where Jesus' Apostles were. Tongues as of fire rested on each one of them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to preach in different languages. A crowd gathered, formed of Jews from Egypt, Rome, modern-day Turkey and Iraq, Palestine, and other places, who were all in Jerusalem for the Pentecost festival. Miraculously, each heard the message of the Apostles in his own language. This multilingual chorus caused some bystanders to think that the Apostles were drunk (see Acts of the Apostles 2:13). Peter, the



Communion

Refers to receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. In general, your companionship and union with Jesus and other baptized Christians in the Church. This union has its origin and high point in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this sense the deepest vocation of the Church is Communion.

Pentecost

The fiftieth day following Easter, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the early Apostles and disciples.



In the account of the Tower of Babel, God confused the speech of humanity. Why does he reverse this in the preaching of the Apostles at Pentecost?

Apostles' leader, clarified that these events were fulfilling Old Testament prophecies (see 2:14–32), especially the Prophet Joel's words:

It will come to pass in the last days, God says,
“that I will pour out a portion of my spirit
upon all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your young men shall see visions,
your old men shall dream dreams.”

(Acts of the Apostles 2:17; see also Joel 3:1)

Peter explained that the glorified Jesus himself was pouring the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and enabling them to miraculously speak in such a way that they could be understood by all members of the audience (see Acts of the Apostles 2:33).

Peter instructed his listeners to repent and be baptized so that their sins would be forgiven, so they too would receive the Holy Spirit. Three thousand people were baptized that day (see 2:37–41).

Pentecost and the Tower of Babel

Pentecost contrasts greatly with the Tower of Babel event described in Genesis. At that time, when the whole world spoke one language (see Genesis 11:1), some people wished to build a tower up to the sky, in order to “make a name for [them]selves” (11:4). Instead God scattered them throughout the earth, confusing their languages so they could no longer communicate.

At Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit enabled people speaking various languages to hear the same message. At the Tower of Babel, God put up barriers to understanding; at Pentecost he broke them down.

Article 6 The Meaning of Pentecost

You may sometimes hear Pentecost referred to as the birthday of the Church. This can be misleading if we mean that the Church began on Pentecost. Recall that the Father and his Son were involved with the Church before the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. The Church was born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated when he instituted the Eucharist, and fulfilled in his death on the cross. A helpful analogy for the revelation of the Church at Pentecost may be a child's day of birth.

At a child's birth, we see her or him with our eyes for the first time, but the child has been prepared for several months within her or his mother. In a similar yet greater way, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost revealed the Church to the world for the first time. The Church itself was not a new entity, however, as she had been in God's plan from before the world was created.

On Pentecost, God as the Trinity was fully revealed for the first time. Jews who followed Jesus at the time of Pentecost worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and also believed that Jesus was the Divine Son of

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit broke through into our world in a new way. How did the action of the Holy Spirit make the Blessed Trinity known to us?

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God the Father. The action of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost enabled these Jewish followers to become aware of their encounter with God the Holy Spirit, the Third Divine Person of the Trinity. For the first time in salvation history, God fully revealed himself as the Blessed Trinity. This mystery of the Trinity—one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the central mystery of our faith. God alone can make this mystery known to us.

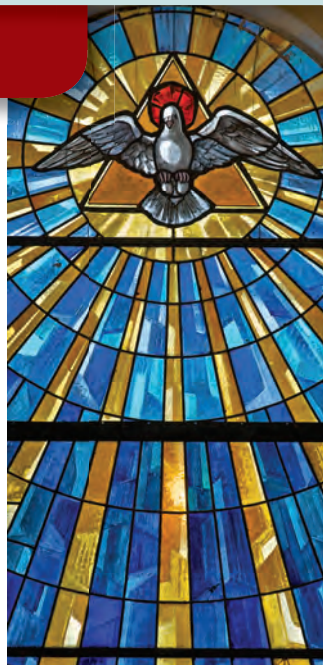
The Age of the Church

In God's plan of salvation, Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church's mission on earth, when the Apostles were able to begin their work of evangelization and to baptize in Jesus' name. No longer present on earth in the same way as before his death and Resurrection, Christ now lived and acted in the world through his Church. In this way, and through his sending of the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfilled his promise to his disciples: "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). ✚

Celebrating Pentecost

We celebrate Pentecost fifty days after Easter. Pentecost marks the ending of the Easter season in the liturgical year, a season in which we celebrate the life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus and the redemption he won for us. You may have noticed that the priest celebrating the Mass on Pentecost wears red, but do you know why? Red symbolizes the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

A second special component of the Pentecost liturgy is the singing or recitation of "*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*," or "Come, Holy Spirit," a Latin sequence that dates from the twelfth century. (See the sidebar "Come, Holy Spirit" for the text of this sequence.)



Article

7 The Holy Spirit Animates, Sanctifies, and Builds the Church

We hear phrases such as “school spirit” or the “spirit of teamwork.” These phrases refer to a kind of energy or atmosphere in a group or organization that we can’t see but that we know is real and active. When this energy brings people together and strengthens their relationships and ability to share in a common mission for the sake of others, it gives us a glimpse of the Holy Spirit’s way of working in the world.

The Holy Spirit, given to the Church’s members by Christ, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. These three elements of the Holy Spirit’s mission are evidence of the Holy Spirit’s energy!

Pray It!

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit” (in the original Latin, “*Veni Sancte Spiritus*”) is a chant, dating from the Middle Ages, that is still sung or recited in the Mass for Pentecost. It has been recorded in many beautiful arrangements, including Gregorian chant.

Come, Holy Spirit, and send down from heaven the ray of your light.

Come, father of the poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of the hearts.

Best consoler, sweet host of the soul, sweet refresher.

Rest in work, cooling in heat, comfort in crying.

O most blessed light, fill the innermost hearts of your faithful.

Without your power nothing is in man, nothing innocent.

Clean what is dirty, water what is dry, heal what is wounded.

Bend what is rigid, heat what is cold, lead what has gone astray.

Grant to your faithful who trust in you, your sevenfold holy gift.

Grant us the reward of virtue, grant us final salvation, grant us eternal joy.

(The Choral Public Domain Library)



animate

To give life to.

sanctify, sanctification

To make holy; sanctification is the process of becoming closer to God and growing in holiness, taking on the righteousness of Jesus Christ with the gift of sanctifying grace.

The Holy Spirit Animates the Church

The Holy Spirit **animates** or gives life to the Church. Saint Augustine said that what the soul is to the human body, so the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, the Church. Prior to his Ascension, Jesus told his disciples, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts of the Apostles 1:8). At Pentecost, tongues as of fire, symbolizing the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit, came upon the disciples. This power converted a group of disciples who had been huddling behind closed doors out of fear (see John 20:19) into bold missionaries, proclaiming their faith in the Risen Christ.

The Holy Spirit Sanctifies the Church

The Church is **sanctified** or made holy by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works to “build up” the holiness of the Church’s members in various ways: through the Sacraments, through the virtues by which we live a moral life, and by the many gifts the Holy Spirit gives to each person. Church members first receive the Holy Spirit through Baptism, the first Sacrament of Christian Initiation. Baptism brings each person into the Body of Christ. Paul says, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Holy Spirit Builds the Church

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit’s power to build the Church was made known. Once the Apostles had received the Holy Spirit, more than three thousand people were baptized!

Catholic Wisdom

A Challenge from Pope Benedict XVI to Youth

Pope Benedict XVI delivered this challenge at World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney, Australia:

Dear young people, let me now ask you a question. Are you living your lives in a way that opens up space for the Spirit in the midst of a world that wants to forget God, or even rejects him in the name of a falsely conceived freedom? How are you using the gifts you have been given, the “power” which the Holy Spirit is even now prepared to release within you? What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make?



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How is Baptism by total immersion symbolic of dying to our old life and rising to new life in Christ?

After Jesus told his followers they would receive the Holy Spirit, he also told them what to do next: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts of the Apostles 1:8). The mission of the Church is to bring people into communion with the Trinity. The Holy Spirit builds individuals’ faith lives, builds community, and attracts new members to join the Church, which builds the Church’s actual numbers. †

The Holy Spirit, Breath, and Wind

In Greek, the language of the New Testament, the word for Spirit is *pneuma*, but this word can also mean “wind” or “breath.” In Hebrew, the primary language of the Old Testament, the word *ruach* has these same meanings.

The Scripture writers take full advantage of this range of meaning. Jesus breathes on his disciples and says, “Receive the holy Spirit” (John 20:22). This recalls God’s action in Genesis 2:7, where the Lord God blew into the nostrils of man the breath of life, and man became a living being. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, there was “a noise like a strong driving wind” (Acts of the Apostles 2:2).

Jesus says, “The wind (or Spirit) blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).



Article

8 Life According to the Holy Spirit

Sometimes people go through dramatic changes in their lives. Let's say Lauren, who has always been somewhat rude and inconsiderate, suddenly becomes much nicer and thoughtful. You might say something like, "It's like Lauren is a different or new person!" The Gift of the Holy Spirit brings this kind of startling change of life.

Life Ignoring the Holy Spirit

We may know about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, but we have the free will to ignore him, or, as Paul would say, to live "according to the flesh" (Romans 8:4). The Apostle Paul contrasted a holy life lived according to the power of the Holy Spirit with a life lived according to the flesh. The person who lives according to the flesh focuses on immediate gratification of his or her own needs. As a result, this person's life will be filled, as Paul said, with hatred, jealousy, lack of self-control, and selfishness. According to Paul, this person may well abuse alcohol and be sexually promiscuous in relationships (see Galatians 5:19–21). The person who ignores the Holy Spirit is so focused on meeting his or her own immediate desires that he or she has no time to consider other people.

The Holy Spirit, the Dove, and the Scriptures

The Scriptures and Christian art often portray the Holy Spirit as a dove. Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his Baptism in the form of a dove. In his poem "God's Grandeur," the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) used the image of the dove:

And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Life in the Holy Spirit

Paul contrasted this selfish life with a life “according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4). Paul spoke of the fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). The person living according to the Spirit is not focused on himself or herself but rather on the needs and well-being of others. Paul said, “The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). This life in the Holy Spirit is the beginning, the first-fruits, a kind of sneak preview of our life in Heaven, where we will share in the perfect love and happiness of the Trinity. Think of people you know who are filled with the Spirit—they radiate calm and joy even during tough times.

The Holy Spirit allows us to deepen our relationship with himself, the Father, and the Son, showing us that we are “children of God” (Romans 8:16), and thus we can cry out, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6).

The Holy Spirit helps teach us how to pray. The next time you pray, begin by asking the Holy Spirit to guide you.

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petition

A prayer form in which one asks God for help and forgiveness.

intercession

A prayer on behalf of another person or group.

charism

A special gift or grace of the Holy Spirit given to an individual Christian or community, commonly for the benefit and building up of the entire Church.

The Teaching of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a teaching role in the Church. Jesus told his disciples, “He will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” (John 14:26). “When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth” (16:13). The Holy Spirit also helps us understand the truths of faith.

The Holy Spirit also teaches us to pray. Have you ever had the experience of feeling that you would like to pray, or that you should pray, but you don’t know what to say? Ask the Holy Spirit for help! The Apostle Paul tells us, “The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Romans 8:26). When we do not know how to pray, it’s good to know that we can call on the Holy Spirit, the “master of prayer,” to help us.

The Holy Spirit, as the master of prayer, not only intercedes for us but also instructs us in our prayer life, inspiring us to express new forms of the basic types of prayer: blessing, **petition**, **intercessions**, thanksgiving, and praise. The Holy Spirit has been teaching people to pray for thousands of years. The Holy Spirit operates through Tradition, the living transmission of God’s truth to us. The Holy Spirit is like a well of living water within the heart of a person who prays, but the Holy Spirit also points the praying person to the source of the living water, Jesus Christ. From the medieval Gregorian chants to the latest praise and worship songs, from the Eucharistic Prayers of the Mass to our own spontaneous prayers before we fall asleep at night, the Holy Spirit is endlessly creative in our prayer lives. †

Article

9 The Holy Spirit Gifts the Church

The Holy Spirit gives various gifts, or **charisms**, to the members of the Church for the benefit of the whole Church and, through the Church, the whole world. As Saint Paul wrote, “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Paul's Description of the Charisms

Saint Paul listed the following charisms in his First Letter to the Corinthians: the expression of knowledge or wisdom, faith, gifts of healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment of spirits, the “variety” or gift of tongues and interpretation of tongues (see 12:8–10).

These charisms should not be confused, however, with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven gifts that describe dispositions or prevailing tendencies rather than specific skills. The seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, based on Isaiah 11:2, are wisdom, understanding, right judgment (counsel), courage (fortitude), knowledge, reverence (piety), and wonder and awe (fear of the Lord).

Ordinary Charisms

There are extraordinary charisms and more ordinary ones, both of which are important. On any given day, you can see these ordinary charisms at work all around you. Teachers share their talents of knowledge and wisdom with their students. A nurse or doctor demonstrates the capacity to heal a patient. A friend may have the ability to learn languages and use it to help recent immigrants to the country.

Live It!

Being Open to the Spirit

How can you be more open to the activity of the Holy Spirit in your own life? Following are a few suggestions:

- Make time for quiet reflection and prayer. If we are constantly busy, it is difficult to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit within us. Many people find it helpful to set aside a specific prayer time in the mornings. Spending an hour in Eucharistic Adoration on a weekly basis is another great opportunity to hear the Holy Spirit.
- Join or form a prayer or Bible study group. Many groups read and discuss the readings for the upcoming Sunday Mass. The Holy Spirit often guides participants into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures.
- Discover or develop the particular gifts that the Holy Spirit has shared with you. Volunteer opportunities often give us a chance to discover or develop talents and abilities; a trusted adult can often help you to discern your own particular gifts.

The Holy Spirit, the Dove, and the Scriptures

The term **charismatic** refers to Christians who place special emphasis on the Gifts of the Spirit, in particular the extraordinary gifts. The modern charismatic renewal movement in the Catholic Church began in 1964 among university students and faculty and has since spread into all areas of the Church. Although not an official “organization,” it is a recognizable movement of the Spirit.

The following are some characteristics of those involved in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal:

- desire for personal holiness and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives, including (but not limited to) the extraordinary gifts, such as speaking in tongues and healing
- preference for lively and enthusiastic worship of God
- acceptance of the authority of the Church **Magisterium** to discern what is truly beneficial in the Charismatic Movement

The Charismatic Renewal has been affirmed as a legitimate movement of the Holy Spirit and a gift to the Church since Pope Paul VI in 1975.



Extraordinary Charisms

Some of the Holy Spirit's Gifts are extraordinary, involving spiritual powers beyond normal human abilities. A person's extraordinary charism of healing, for example, might be visible to others through a miraculous cure that has no scientific explanation. Some people have the gift of prophecy, or the gift of speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Speaking in tongues is the gift of praying in a spiritual language; no one else can understand it unless it is interpreted by someone with the charism of interpreting tongues (see 1 Corinthians 14:2,14).

Charisms of Leadership

Sometimes we describe political or other leaders as charismatic, meaning they possess a certain power of personality or speaking ability that draws people to them. The Church too has charisms of leadership, but these are Gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable a leader to provide benefit to the whole Church. In his discussion on gifts, Paul says that God has designated believers to be Apostles, prophets, teachers, administrators, and assistants (see 1 Corinthians 12:28).

Founders of religious orders or congregations often have specific charisms that their followers also pursue. Saint Benedict's charism of combining work and prayer has inspired the spiritual life of vowed Benedictines and their associates for centuries. Saint Francis's charism of embracing a life of poverty and simplicity inspired thousands to follow in his footsteps.

As leaders and teachers of the Church, the Pope and the bishops in union with him, have the charism of **infallibility** so that the Church may always avoid error in her teaching on faith and morals. Infallibility extends to the whole of divine Revelation. One way the gift of infallibility is exercised is when the Pope, as supreme pastor and teacher, defines a doctrine as infallible. The most recent infallible teaching was Pope Pius XII's proclamation of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1950. Another way infallibility is exercised is when the bishops, together with the Pope, agree, especially in an Ecumenical Council, on a teaching that all must hold because it is divinely revealed.



charismatic

The word refers to a person gifted with the charism or graces of the Holy Spirit such as healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. Because self-deception is always possible, the charisms claimed by such a person must be verified by the Church.

Magisterium

The Church's living teaching office, which consists of all bishops, in communion with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

infallibility

The gift given by the Holy Spirit to the Pope and the bishops in union with him to teach on matters of faith and morals without error.

The Church Needs All Charisms

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every member of the Church, no matter how humble, because each person can contribute to building up the Church. Some have a musical gift, others have the charism of leadership or coaching, and yet others have the gift of patient listening and the ability to give wise advice. As a young person, you may already know some of your gifts. You will discover more as you mature. †

Each one of us has gifts we can contribute to the building up of the Church. These gifts may be obvious, such as musical abilities, or subtle, like being a good listener. What gifts do you possess that you can share with the Church?

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Part Review

1. What does it mean to say that the works of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are inseparable?
2. Where does the Holy Spirit lead the Church?
3. Describe the events of Pentecost.
4. What did Peter say would happen to those people who repented and were baptized on the day of Pentecost?
5. Why is it appropriate to say that the Church is revealed rather than born on Pentecost?
6. Why was Pentecost the Revelation of the Holy Trinity as well as the Church?
7. What are three important elements of the Church's mission?
8. How did the Holy Spirit transform Jesus' disciples?
9. Contrast a life lived ignoring the Holy Spirit and one lived in the Holy Spirit.
10. How does the Holy Spirit help us to pray?
11. What is the subtle difference between a charism and a Gift of the Holy Spirit?
12. Describe how founders of religious orders often had specific charisms that their followers also pursued.