



You and the Holy Spirit



Spirit—a biblical understanding

In Hebrew [ruah] and in Greek [pneuma] literally means “wind” or “air” respectively. In Scripture as a whole ‘spirit’ is used in a variety of ways. It can signify the ‘soul’ which continues even after the death of the body [Acts 7.59 ‘While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”’]. Good angels are called ‘spirits in the divine service’ [Heb 1.14]. There are ‘evil spirits’ [I Sam 18.10; Mk 5.13; Lk 7.21]. The spirit can be acted upon [Gen 41.8 ‘Pharaoh’s spirit was troubled’] and so on. The Psalmist [51.11] invokes God not to remove his holy spirit from us.

It is, however, in the New Testament that we see the richest development. Here, Holy Spirit—sometimes referred to as God’s Spirit; the Spirit of Christ—is that which is the permanent possession of the believer [Rom 8.9 ‘the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.’]. Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ [John 20.22] - the fullness of which is seen in the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost [Acts 2.4] - as promised by Jesus before his departure to the Father [John 16.7]. The presence of the Spirit is what empowers the believer, endowing with spiritual gifts—I Cor 12-14; Eph 4.11ff] and producing spiritual fruits—Gal 5.22ff. It is because the Church has the Holy Spirit that she can be called the Body of Christ—she does the work of Christ as his hands and feet and voice and power in the world.



Spirit—a Franciscan understanding

‘To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. [II Thess 1.11-12]

- The **Spirit’s call** to follow the Franciscan way of life is **our call**
- With the grace of the Holy Spirit, we must examine our hearts in order to:
 1. **reflect upon our perspectives in life**
 2. **consider how others see us, how we see ourselves and how Jesus sees us**
- The Spirit is at work in different ways—through prayer, pain, love, people, even through hatred; loneliness and loss, sorrow and joy
- The Spirit blows with kindness. We must wait patiently for the Spirit’s call, and respond by allowing him to take control of us and work through us...

Secular Franciscans—

- Express their ardent love by imitating Mary [OFS Rule, 9]
- Strive to purify their hearts from yearning for possession and power [OFS Rule, 11]
- With a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord/an image of Christ [OFS Rule 13]
- Seek to build a more fraternal world/in the spirit of service [OFS Rule, 14]
- Promote justice by their lives and courageous activity [OFS Rule, 15]
- Seek ways of unity and fraternal harmony though dialogue, love and pardon [OFS Rule, 19]