

SESSION 4 / GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within you, whom you have from God (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Theme At our baptism we were anointed with the Holy Spirit who lovingly waits for us to call on him that he may help us to grow in holiness and our likeness of Christ.

Welcome: We Pray and Share Together (15 mins)

O God,
send forth your Holy Spirit
into our hearts that we might perceive,
into our minds that we might remember,
into our souls that we might meditate.
Inspire us to speak with love, holiness,
tenderness and mercy.
Teach, guide and direct our thoughts and senses
from beginning to end.
May your grace help us to see with your eyes
and to act with your love and light in our hearts.
May we be strengthened with wisdom from on high
for the sake and glory of your kingdom.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

In a period of calm and a space of trust, each one of us is invited to share briefly one thing that has happened in the past week. It could be one thing that has given you cause for concern, something shared during the last time you met as a group or something that has given you cause to celebrate.

In this moment of peace and fellowship, we pray for the good of the group. Each member is invited to offer up any personal intentions. We also pray for the good of the Church, for wisdom in our country and for the common good. Let us also bring to mind the poor, the sick and those who have died.

We join together in praying the Apostles' Creed (page 48)

Read and Reflect on the Scriptures Matthew 3:13-17, 4:1 (5 mins)

A variety of short prayers before the reading of Scripture can be found on page 46.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptised by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he consented.

And when Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

Meditate on the Word Matthew 3:13-17, 4:1 (20 mins)

Once the Scripture passage has been read you are asked to choose a word or phrase that has struck you. Underline it with a pen or you might wish to simply hold it in mind. You will be invited to share the word or phrase with the group.

Another person will then read the passage. While you listen attentively, repeat the process of holding onto a word or phrase, making a note and sharing it. In doing this, you are invited to consider the following questions:

How have these words or phrases resonated in my heart and in my mind?

What is the Lord saying to me at this very moment in my life?

In what way has my reading of this passage of Holy Scripture changed me?

How has it helped me to resolve to be more Christ-like in the coming days?

You are encouraged to re-read the Holy Scripture during the coming week, revisiting these questions.

Explore and Reflect on the Theme (25 mins)

Published in the middle of the twentieth century, the Narnia series, in particular, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) has become a classic work, enjoyed by millions of children and adults around the world. The author of this series and many other works for adults and children is one of Britain's literary giants, C.S. Lewis. In his own conversion story, *Surprised by Joy* (1955), C.S. Lewis described how on reading the *Phantastes* (1858), the work of George MacDonald, 'his imagination was baptised'. He was drawn to use the natural world to write fantasy stories retelling biblical themes.

Lewis and MacDonald, however, were not crafting an entirely new genre. Written long before the coming of Christ, the Old Testament used the natural world to represent the divine. Perhaps most hidden in the Old Testament is the Holy Spirit. However, its importance is immediately obvious, in Genesis 1:2 we read 'And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' We see intimations of the Holy Spirit in the dove sent out by Noah and in a cloud or column of fire which symbolised the Holy Spirit guiding the chosen people in the desert. Time and again, the Holy Spirit worked through anointings with oil to set apart individuals to serve as priests, prophets or kings.

Holy Scripture recounts how the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus when he was baptised by his cousin, John the Baptist, in the River Jordan. From that moment, Jesus became Christ, the anointed one bestowed with a particular vocation, a calling. The Holy Spirit was to accompany him on his mission to preach the Good News, to build the kingdom of God and to ultimately suffer and die that you and I may have the opportunity to be with him now and forever.

Jesus himself knew that in the same way our ancestors had rejected the message proclaimed by the prophets of the Old Testament, people would continue to choose to go their own way in search of power, pleasure and possessions. This is why he sent the Holy Spirit to be our guide, and 'our Helper' 'to bring to [our] remembrance all that [Jesus said]' (John 14:26). Jesus knows it can be difficult for us to choose what is good and he wants to accompany us on our life journey to him.

At our Baptism, we are anointed with the oil of Chrism and bestowed with the Holy Spirit in a bond of love. When we take time to pray it is the Holy Spirit who quietly and lovingly prompts us to action in the silence of our hearts. The Holy Spirit is there when we ask, and when we seek him out.

By gifting us the Holy Spirit, God our loving Father is giving us what we need to undertake our baptismal vocation: to share in Christ's threefold mission:

- **as priests**, we are called to share in the prayer and sacrifice of Jesus. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can recognise and increase our little daily sacrifices, those times when we lovingly give of ourselves for another, AND join them to Christ's offering of himself to his heavenly Father at every Mass when the Priest says: 'Pray brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father';
- **as prophets**, we are called to actively form ourselves through study of Holy Scripture and spiritual reading that we may come to see like Jesus, to think like him and act like him - under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Just as the saints modelled Christ's message of love, mercy and forgiveness, we are called to do the same in our homes and communities; and
- **as kings**, we are called to master our bodies, govern our families and serve those in need.
With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can stand firm in the face of the temptations of this world.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, our own dying and rising to new life initiated at our Baptism becomes our way of life. Our continual turning from selfishness and pride to live in Christ is made visible. The Holy Spirit quietly awaits and strengthens even our littlest desire to live our Baptismal vocation - to guide us as we participate in Christ's threefold mission. It is not so much that we *were* baptised but that we *are* baptised.

Responding to what has been heard

At the Easter Masses, we renew our Baptismal Promises as Jesus calls us to a conversion of heart (cf. Mark 1:15). Reflect this week on the following question: **Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?** Will you be able to state your 'yes' to this truth this Easter?

By committing ourselves to action we are saying that we want to make a difference in our lives and in the lives of others. We are committing to make the words of the Apostles' Creed resonate in our lives. What have you heard today that you find challenging? What do you find affirming? What are you going to do about what you have heard today?

Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord (10 mins)

You are invited to close with a time of meditation on Psalm 69. Read it slowly, pause between verses, reflect on its meaning for your life and your journey in faith, hope and love. You may also wish to conclude with the Lord's Prayer, another prayer of your own choosing or a moment of silence.

A: Save me from the waters of the deep,
lest the waves overwhelm me.
Let not the deep engulf me,
nor the pit close its mouth on me.

B: LORD, answer, for your mercy is kind;
in your great compassion, turn towards me.
Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in distress.

A: The poor when they see it will be glad,
and God-seeking hearts will revive;

B: for the LORD listens to the needy,
and does not spurn his own in their chains.

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A blessing taken from the Liturgy of the Hours is included here.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

From the Rite of Baptism: Chrism Oil

This perfumed Chrism oil, consecrated by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass each year, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptised. By this anointing, the newly baptised receive an invisible, yet indelible spiritual mark which one might describe as an 'engraving' of the image of Christ, a sign of union with him. 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God' (Galatians 2:20).

We are anointed with Chrism oil for a second time at our Confirmation which completes our baptismal anointing and enables us to share more fully in the mission of Jesus Christ. Do speak to your Parish Priest if you have not yet been confirmed.

[Catechism references relating to this session 695, 1241-1242]

About Visio Divina

'To move the viewer from seeing, to contemplation, to adoration of God is the primary role of sacred and religious art. An artistic image of Christ, the Mother of God, a biblical event, or Christian saint provides an earthly glimpse into eternal realities, a 'head start to heaven,' so to speak. The adaptation of lectio divina for encounters with Christian art... provides one concrete way for the reader to make this journey from seeing to contemplation to adoration.'



Meditate on Sacred Art: Visio Divina

Describe what you can see, what is happening?

What does this picture say about the relationship within the Trinity?

In Baptism, you enter into this relationship of love. How do you respond?

How might you deepen your knowledge and love of God in the coming days?

The Baptism of Christ (1472–1475) by Andrea del Verrocchio and Leonardo da Vinci / Uffizi