

Back to the Basics

The Apostles' Creed: 3rd Article, Part I

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? *I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

This last Article of the Creed focuses on the Holy Spirit is about Sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier; the church is the vehicle where He does the sanctifying; this Article also talks about the process of sanctification. This week, we will focus our attention on the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit

The Person of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, true God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. He is not merely the power or energy of God, nor is He just a way we refer to the presence of God on earth.

- Jesus calls Him a person — *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).*
- He is sent by the Father and the Son — *"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21).*
- He is one with the Father and the Son — *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:18).*

The Work of the Holy Spirit

- The main work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify us. There are two ways we refer to this:
 - The wide sense—the whole work of the Holy Spirit by which He brings us to faith and enables us to lead a godly life.
 - The narrow sense—that part of His work by which He directs and enables us to lead a godly life.

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

- The Holy Spirit calls us through the Gospel and brings us to faith in Christ.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this He called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

- The Holy Spirit has enlightened me with His gifts, that is, given me the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory (1 Peter 1:8).

- This work of the Holy Spirit is called conversion (being turned) or regeneration (new birth).
 - *I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you (Psalm 51:13).* [Conversion]
 - *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:5-6).* [Regeneration]
- The Holy Spirit goes beyond working faith in me, to renew my life, making it possible and giving me the desire to live rightly (sanctification in the narrow sense).

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

- Through Word and the Sacraments, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to His church—faith in Christ, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life
- In apostolic times, the Holy Spirit gave some Christians the gift to perform miraculous signs (e.g. healings, speaking in tongues, raising the dead). God doesn't necessarily give these gifts to all Christians, but as He pleases.

The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works (2 Corinthians 12:12).

- The Holy Spirit keeps me in the true faith, preserving me for salvation.

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

- God would love to work this salvation in all people, but many reject the Word and resist the Spirit and remain in unbelief.

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you (Acts 7:51).

Next week: The Church, the Communion of the Saints.