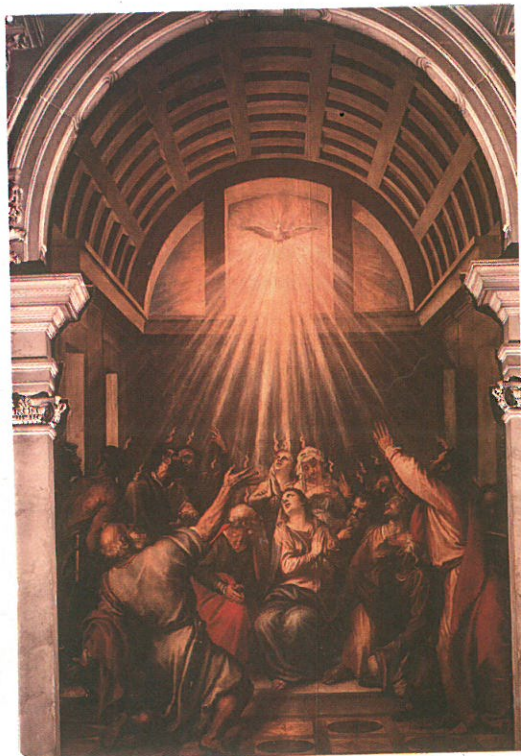


## FACTFILE 7

### THE HOLY SPIRIT



'Effusion of the Holy Spirit' by Titian.

**T**he Trinity is One. We do not confess three Gods, but one God in three persons, the consubstantial Trinity. The divine persons do not share the one divinity among themselves but each of them is God, whole and entire: 'The Father is that which the Son is, the Son that which the Father is, the Father and the Son that which the Holy Spirit is, i.e. by nature one God'.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (253).*

The Apostles' Creed next states that Christians believe in the **Holy Spirit**. Spirit is a translation of the Hebrew 'ruah' meaning 'air', 'breath', 'life', and the Holy Spirit is God's presence in the world. Catholics believe the Holy Spirit is present in everything the Church does and is what 'inspires' Christians. The Holy Spirit is also how God gives life to and rules his creation. So the Holy Spirit can be thought of as God's activity in the world.

**T**he Holy Spirit, whom Christ the Head pours out on his members, builds, animates and sanctifies the Church.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (747).*

The Church has many **symbols for the Holy Spirit**:

- fire • cloud • the dove • and, in baptism, water.

Christians believe that Jesus' greatest gift to his followers was his gift of the Spirit through which God can come into our hearts. This is seen particularly in the sacraments – the mighty works of God which bear fruit in the new life in Christ.

Christians, like Jews and Muslims, believe in only one God, but they believe that God reveals himself in three ways – as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit. This is known as **the Trinity**.

This means that God is three in one and one in three. The Church teaches that there are three persons in God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and yet only one substance – God. This is the great mystery of the Christian faith which is beyond human understanding and yet Christians know from their experience of God that he is three persons and yet is only one God.

**T**he Church ... is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

- in the Scriptures he inspired;
- in the Tradition to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses;
- in the Church's *Magisterium* which he assists;
- in the sacramental liturgy, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ;
- in prayer, wherein he intercedes for us;
- in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up;
- in the signs of apostolic and missionary life;
- in the witness of saints.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (688).*

**The Apostles' Creed ends with the words:**

I believe in

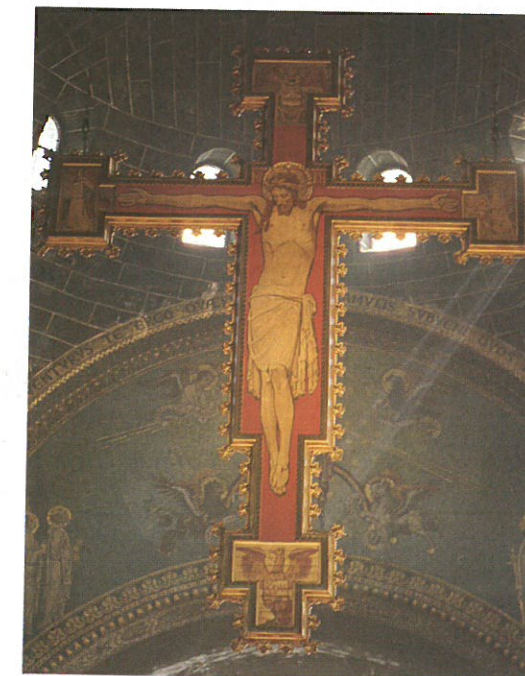
- the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints (see factfile 9)
- the forgiveness of sins (see factfile 16)
- the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting (see factfile 25).

## FACTFILE 8

### SIN AND SALVATION

**S**in is above before all else an offence against God, a rupture of communion with him.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (1440).*



Christians believe that Jesus' death brought about reconciliation.

### The need for repentance and faith

The Gospels state that the public ministry of Jesus began when he met John the Baptist. Christians believe that John was the forerunner of Jesus, that he prepared the way for him. John called on people to repent. **Repentance** means completely changing one's life for the better. John told the people who came to him to give up their evil ways and, as a sign of this, he baptised them in the River Jordan.

When the first Christians began to proclaim their beliefs, they told their listeners to 'repent and believe the gospel'. By the word 'gospel' they meant the good news of what God had done for human beings through the life and death of Jesus. Belief in the gospel is what Christians mean by faith. A person becomes a Christian through faith: this means accepting the truth of the claims made about Jesus as to who he is (the Son of God) and what he did (the Saviour who saved the world from sin). Christians show their faith in Jesus by joining the community of believers, the Church.

### Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation

Christians believe that all human beings (except Jesus) have been and are sinful. Everyone does wrong and because wrongdoing is offensive to God, everyone needs forgiveness. Christians believe that the killing of Jesus represented human wrongdoing at its worst. They see his death as a unique moment in human history. It provided the opportunity and motive for people to be saved from their sins. Christians believe that the death of Jesus was part of God's plan and the means by which the forgiveness of sins is achieved.

Sin separates human beings from God. Christians believe that the death of Jesus has saved people from the power of sin and their faith in this reconciles them to God. In other words, Jesus' death looks like the triumph of evil over good, but it is the exact opposite: the goodness of Jesus was not destroyed by his death, but lives on in his followers. So the death of Jesus removed the distance from God caused by sin and this is what Christians mean by **reconciliation**. For Catholics, this reconciliation is achieved primarily through baptism and renewed through the sacrament of penance and celebration of the Mass.

Reconciliation is shown in the story of Zacchaeus, a cheat, who showed his faith in Jesus by climbing a tree to see him. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house for a meal and Jesus' love for Zacchaeus showed him his sins and he repaid everyone he had cheated. So by faith Zacchaeus' sins were forgiven by Jesus, and Zacchaeus was reconciled with God and with the people he had wronged.  
(Luke 19:1-9.)

**T**he confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission, man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church (1455).*