



Opening Question:

Who motivates you?

I believe in the Holy Spirit

the Lord and Giver of Life

who proceeds from the Father and the Son

who together with the Father and the Son

is adored and glorified,

who spoke through the prophets.

Nicene Creed

What's an experience of God like? Answers to that question might differ. But we can all agree on the source of those experiences. The Holy Spirit. So, what or who is the Holy Spirit? Let's explore that subject in three ways: our experience of the Spirit, titles and images that describe that experience, and, finally, the revelation of the Spirit as the third person of the Trinity.

Experience of the Spirit

So, what or who is the Holy Spirit? The only way to answer that question is to answer another. What does the Spirit do in our lives? It's very difficult to wrap our minds around the person of the Spirit. But it's much easier to talk about our experiences of the Spirit. The Spirit is the power of God. It invites us, motivates us, even pressures us to move closer to God. Most of the time, the Spirit is like a barely felt puff of air, almost imperceptible.

While Elijah was on Mount Sinai, the Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here? Go out and stand on the mountain. I want you to be there when I pass by."



All at once, a strong wind shook the mountain and shattered the rocks. But the Lord was not in the wind.

Next, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. Finally, there was a gentle breeze, and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat.

1 Kings 19: 9b, 11-13a

While we might easily overlook the power and movement of the Spirit in our lives, the fact we are believers, that we pray, we read the Scriptures, and we worship on Sunday, that we go out of our ways to help others, are all due to the work of the Spirit.

Images of the Spirit

There are many different names and images for the Spirit. He is our advocate and consoler in the tough times. He is the spiritual water who quenches our thirst for life's answers and washes us clean from our inequities. He is the spiritual oil poured into our hearts that seals us as disciples. He is that inner fire, that passion which inspires us to do good in the world. He is the light within the cloud that marks the presence of God for us. He is the finger of God to point the way for us. He is the gentle dove that comes down and rests within us.

The Third Person of the Trinity

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life...

Nicene Creed

As the power of God, the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. It was active when the Father created the universe and humanity.

I believe in the Holy Spirit...who spoke through the prophets.

Nicene Creed

It was active when he made covenants with Abraham, through Moses and with David when he formed the nation of Israel and spoke to the people through the prophets.

I believe in the Holy Spirit...who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Nicene Creed

The Spirit was active when Mary received the Good News of her Son from Gabriel, when John the Baptist prepared the people for the Messiah, and in the baptism of Christ himself.

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan river.. When Jesus came out of the water, he saw the sky open at that moment and the Holy Spirit came down like a dove. The Spirit entered Jesus.

Mark 1:9ac, 10

The Spirit was active in the ministry of Jesus. As the prophet Isaiah predicted about the Messiah:

The Spirit of the Lord God has taken control of me! The Lord has chosen and sent me to tell the oppressed the good news, to heal the brokenhearted, and to announce freedom for prisoners and captives.

This is the year when the Lord God will show kindness to us.

Isaiah 61:1-2a

The Spirit was active when Jesus showed the world his loving Father by dying on the cross and, thus, saving us. He also promised to pour out that same Spirit onto his disciples:

I will send you the Spirit who comes from the Father and shows what is true. The Spirit will help you and will tell you about me. Then you will also tell others about me.

John 15:26-27a

Which is exactly what happened.

When Pentecost day arrived, everyone gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a noise came from heaven that sounded like a violent wind. It filled the house where they sat. Then fiery tongues spread out and sat on each person there. Everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit. And they began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit directed them to.

Acts 2:1-4

I believe in the Holy Spirit who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified.

Nicene Creed

The Spirit is active now in our lives. It brings us to faith when we look back and accept both the Scriptures and Jesus as the Christ. It brings us to faith when we look forward to the arrival of Christ in glory and, in the meantime, when we put our faith into practice by serving others. There is an old saying:

Wherever God acts, God is.

Wherever the Spirit acts, God is present. That's why we hold fast to the doctrine of the Spirit in the Trinity. Just as the Father and the Son share the same divine nature, so does the Spirit. Indeed, it is the Spirit who reveals God as the Trinity.

What's an experience of God like? It's an experience of the Spirit. It can be life changing and dramatic or barely perceptible. We can describe it best in images and track it in the Scriptures and the history of God's people. Ultimately, we know that experience as an encounter with the third person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit.

Closing Question:

Where and when have you experienced the Spirit?

Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraphs 683-747.

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