



HIS ASCENT AND THE ONE HE SENT

RESURRECTION AND THE SPIRIT (Nos. 631–747)

SESSION OBJECTIVES

The presentation for this session will include three topics: the events from Jesus' descent to the dead to his ascent into heaven; the Holy Spirit's mission and symbols; and the role of the Holy Spirit in the economy. After this session, you should understand ...

- What is meant by the statement in the Creed: "He descended into hell:"
- The significance of the Resurrection, a miraculous yet historical event that is at the center of our Christian Faith.
- The signs of the Holy Spirit.
- The action of the Holy Spirit in salvation history.

READING THE *CATECHISM*

The presentation for Session Nine will cover *Catechism* Nos. 631-747. If your time is limited, you might want to begin with the essential paragraphs for this session: 631-635, 639,640,643,645, 647, 648, 651-655, 659, 661-664, 669-674, 677,679,683,685,686,688,689,691,692,702,703,705,707,708,710,711, 717,720, 721-726, 727, 731-734, and 737-739.

PART 1: GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

In this session we complete the mysteries described in the second part of the Creed having to do with our Savior, and begin the third major part of the Creed, which focuses on the Holy Spirit. These mysteries of Jesus include his descent to the realm of the dead, his resurrection, his ascension to the Father, and his Second Coming. Together these four topics cover the rest of human history!

At the Incarnation and again at the Resurrection, Christ put his stamp of divine sonship on the world. The world was fully redeemed by his saving death, and so he already reigns over the whole world. But the rest of history, from the time of his ascension forward, is made up of the spread of his kingdom to include all those who will receive this precious gift of life. That kingdom will reach its fulfillment at Christ's return in glory, when time and history will come to an end.

His dominion, we will see, extends to every dimension of creation, to "the breadth, length, height, and depth" of all that is (Ephesians 3:18), as well as to every part of our lives. As in other parts of the *Catechism*, there is a Trinitarian pattern in Christ's movements here: his descent to the depths in death; his resurrection back into the breadth and length of the realm of the living; and then his glorious Ascension to the heights of heaven.

The great Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure saw in this text a three-dimensional cruciform pattern, "a certain intelligible cross" that describes the whole of the universe and our own Christian experience as well. In baptism, we follow the same threefold pattern: we die to sin, are raised up to new life, and anticipate our own eventual resurrection to eternal life in heaven.

In all that he said and did, Christ presents us with the fullness of revelation; the whole meaning and purpose of everything that is! And for the diligent disciple, the reward of prayer and study is the way in which these meanings begin to become clear.

From the mysteries of Christ's life, the Creed moves to the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The *Catechism* has already touched on the Holy Spirit in its discussion of the Trinity (see Nos. 232-267). Now it returns to look at the Holy Spirit in the context of the divine "economy;" in the working out of God's plan. Remember that what God does in time reveals who he is:

- In the Old Testament, we come to know God as Creator.
- In Jesus' acts of sonship in the New Testament, we come to know that God is also Father and Savior.
- In the works of the Holy Spirit, we come to know God as Sanctifier and, of course, as utterly holy in himself.

As we will see in the age of the Church, the Holy Spirit dispenses for us the grace won for us by Christ. And as we make the transition from the second chapter of the Creed on the Son, to the third chapter on the Holy Spirit, we are reminded of a primary theme of the *Catechism*, and so also this course: from Blessing to Blessing.

The first paragraph of the *Catechism* offers us a summary of the entire story of human history as a coming out from God and a returning to him, what we have called the journey from Blessing to Blessing. It ought not be surprising, then, that Christ, who is the "recapitulation" of all things, descends from God (never leaving his divinity behind) in his incarnation and returns in his ascension. He has already completed the human course—from God and back to him—and pioneers the way for us back to the Father's blessing. That is, Jesus is himself the map of the journey back to the Blessing.

Since we are supposed to follow Jesus as the way to the Father, this last section of the second part of the Creed represents a vital lesson in how to do so. The events of the paschal mystery show a similar pattern. Jesus descends, this time not from heaven but to the underworld. Then he ascends, not yet back to heaven but to the realm of the living in his resurrection. In this way, he touches every possible part of human existence. This same pattern is even present in the very last part of the Creed's second chapter: "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead ' Just as Jesus has come and gone in his first advent, he will come down again and lead us home at the end. The descending and ascending of Christ will happen finally and fully at the end of time.

The *Catechism's* reflection on the third part of the Creed, our profession of faith in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, shows us again the same pattern (though this is not so clear in the simple profession of the Creed itself). The Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost, accompanies the Church throughout history, and calls out to the Son (from within the souls of the Church's members) to "Come!" (see Revelation 22:17).

The economy of this last phase of the Trinitarian history of salvation is also one of descent and ascent. In this phase, we begin to see our own place in this great cosmic movement, because the coming of the Spirit inaugurates the age of the Church, the end of the age, and the end of time. This lesson on the Holy Spirit stresses our return to our original likeness to God, lost through the sin of Adam and Eve. This is the central work of the Holy Spirit in the age of the Church, which is what we will be looking at in greater detail in the sessions that follow.

Consubstantial: Why Its Meaning Matters

The English translation of the recently promulgated *Third Edition of the Roman Missal* makes certain linguistic changes to the Nicene Creed. It changes the phrase "one in being" to "consubstantial" in reference to Jesus and the Father. *Consubstantial* is a more precise English rendering of the official Latin; it describes Jesus as being of the same divine substance as God.

The term *consubstantial* has a long history in the Church.

The Arian heresy denied the divinity of Jesus, necessitating the Council of Nicaea in the year 325. The resulting Nicene Creed that we pray today formally declared the doctrine that Jesus is identical in substance to God the Father. *Consubstantialis* is the Latin rendering of the Greek *homoousios*-*"identical in substance"*-a term that settled the argument.

Later, the consubstantiality of the Holy Spirit was also challenged: the dispute was over how the Spirit was distinct from the Father and the Son while sharing the same essence. This question was answered by the diligent work of St. Athanasius and advanced by Cappadocian fathers: St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. The Council of Constantinople (381) affirmed the Nicene Creed and explained that the Spirit "proceeds" from the Father and is "one and equal with the Father and the Son"¹ (No. 245).

¹Council of Toledo XI (675): DS 527.

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Pray the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary every day this week:

- *The Resurrection*
 - *The Ascension*
 - *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*
 - *The Assumption of Mary*
 - *The Coronation of Mary*
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GLOSSARY TERMS

Ascension

The term we use to refer to Jesus' bodily return to the Father in heaven after the forty days he spent appearing to the disciples after the Resurrection.

Holy Spirit

The third of the three divine Persons of the Holy Trinity, who was fully revealed at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is of the same divine substance, essence, and nature as the Father and the Son, and so is fully God.



Paraclete

Another name for the Holy Spirit, from a Greek word meaning "one who accompanies" or "one who consoles".

Passion

This word comes from the Latin verb *patior*, which means "to endure" or "suffer." A *passio* is an act of suffering, and so we use this term to describe the whole of Christ's redeeming work in suffering for our sins.

Resurrection

Belief in Christ's resurrection from the dead is a central tenet of Christianity by which we hold that by an act of the divine power, the lifeless human body of Jesus was resuscitated in a new, immortal, and glorious form and rejoined to his human soul and divine Person.

RESURRECTION AND THE SPIRIT (Nos. 631-747)

I. Deepest Descent to Highest Ascent

A. "Christ Descended into Hell" (see No. 632)

1. Jesus descended to *Hades* (Greek) or *Sheol* (Hebrew)= the realm of the dead; in the Latin of the Creed, *ad inferos* = "to the dead"
 - a. Not the hell of the "damned" (see No. 633)
 - b. Jesus descends to "free the just who had gone before him" (No. 633)
 - c. To the "limbo of the fathers" (*limbus patrum*)
- i. The abode of the just of the Old Testament
 - ii. Those awaiting the grace of Christ to enter heaven (e.g., Adam, Abraham, Elijah, David-see No. 635)
2. Jesus' Paschal Mystery fulfills the three feasts of the Passover season (from Holy Thursday- Easter Sunday)
 - a. Passover (Passion)
 - b. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Death)
 - c. The Feast of First Fruits (Resurrection)

B. Resurrection

1. "The Historical and Transcendent Event" (No. 639)
2. Jesus appears to his apostles over the course of forty days
3. The empty tomb (see No. 640)
4. John 20: scholarly study by Don Antonio Persili

5. Witnesses to the event (see No. 644)
6. Resurrection= a Trinitarian mystery, a "transcendent intervention" of the Trinity (No. 648)
7. A corroboration of everything Jesus said and did, of his work of salvation (see No. 651)

C. Ascension and Return

1. Ascension to the Father's "right hand" demonstrates his power (see No. 659)
2. Jesus sits on his throne as priest and king (see Nos. 662-664)
3. Jesus' return brings about the "new heavens and a new earth"² (No. 671)
4. His coming is delayed, but is "imminent"³ (No. 673)
5. Jews still have a part to play in the economy (see No. 674; Acts 3:19ff)
6. Judgment at Second Coming is a "finding" of the state in which we are

II. The Holy Spirit and the Age of the Church

A. The Holy Spirit

1. The coming of the Spirit inaugurates the Age of the Church
2. Divine "self-effacement" (see No. 687)
3. Holy Spirit's presence expressed in sign and symbol

B. Names, titles, and symbols

1. "Holy Spirit" is a proper name (see No. 693)
2. Titles of the Spirit: Paraclete, Advocate (*"ad-vocatus"*), Spirit of truth, Spirit of the promise, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of adoption (see No. 692-693)
3. Scriptural symbols for the Spirit: water, anointing, fire, cloud and light, seal, hand, finger, dove (see Nos. 694-701)

4. Holy Spirit is given presence by symbol

III. The Economy in the Holy Spirit

A. The work of the Spirit in the three ages of the economy

1. Creation and Time of Promise (see No. 702-716)
2. The Spirit of Christ in the Fullness of Time (see No. 717-730)
3. The Spirit and the Church in the Last Days (see No. 731-741)

B. Role of Mary, Spouse of the Spirit-a "mini-economy"

1. Mary is "*prepared*" by the Holy Spirit (see No. 722)
2. "In Mary, the Holy Spirit *fulfills* the plan of the Father's loving goodness" (No. 723)
3. "In Mary, the Spirit *manifests* the Son of the Father ..." (No. 724)
4. "[T]hrough Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men ... *into communion* with Christ" (No. 725)

C. The Holy Spirit and the Church

1. The Church is "the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit" (No 737)
2. The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church
 - a. "The Spirit *prepares* men ... with his grace ..."
 - b. "The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them ..."
 - c. "He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist ..."
 - d. The Spirit brings us "*into communion* with God "

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The *Catechism* describes the inhabitants of the "abode of the dead" as those who are "deprived of the vision of God" (No. 633). Heaven, therefore, consists of the vision of God or the "beatific vision." In what way does your own understanding of heaven include this notion?
2. Evidence for the historical reality of Christ's resurrection is found in Nos. 638-644. Why is this of such importance? Why do you suppose so many would attempt to deny the Resurrection?
3. The *Catechism* tells us that "the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold;" such that, "some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection" (No. 643). Have you ever had a situation in which your faith in Christ was shaken or in which a tragedy or difficulty caused you to doubt God? How did this situation resolve itself? (If it hasn't resolved itself, consider making an appointment to discuss it with your pastor.)
4. Though it is important to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a Person, in fact the third Person of the Trinity, *Catechism* Nos. 691-701 describe the titles and symbols that help us recognize the work of the Holy Spirit and understand him better. What title or symbol has been particularly helpful in your own relationship with the Holy Spirit and why?
5. *Catechism* No. 688 explains where the Holy Spirit is found in the Church. In which of these places have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life, either quietly or powerfully?
6. The saving significance of the Resurrection makes it possible for Christians to live not for themselves, but for Christ (see Nos. 651-655). In what specific ways do you live for Christ?

CLOSING PRAYER

Eternal Father, eternal Son, we thank you for the gift of your Spirit, by which you give us rebirth to new life in grace. Make us always thankful, especially in our celebrations of the sacraments, in which he comes to us with renewed strength whenever we call upon him. Send your Holy Spirit down upon us now to revive and renew your whole Church in holiness. We ask this through Christ our Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HOMEWORK QUESTIONS **Name** _____

From the *Catechism* Nos. 631-658

1. The Creed states that Jesus "descended into hell." The *Catechism* indicates that this is a reference to the "abode of the dead" and not the realm of the damned. Why did Jesus go there?

2. How was Christ's resurrection historically verified?

3. How was Christ's resurrection essentially different from the other miraculous events in which he brought dead people, such as Lazarus, back to life?

4. What does "... adoptive filiation ..." gain for us?

From the *Catechism* Nos. 559-682

5. After the Ascension, Jesus takes his position "... seated at the Father's right hand ..."
What does this signify?

6. The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended until the "full inclusion" of whom?

From the *Catechism* Nos. 683-747

7. What is required before we can be "in touch with Christ"?

8. What does the Hebrew word from which we get the word "Spirit" literally mean?

9. Made in God's image, what has man lost as a result of original sin, which the Holy Spirit begins to restore?

10. Who is "... the masterwork of the mission of the Son and the Spirit in the fullness of time"?

11. On what day was the Trinity fully revealed?

12. List the fruits of the Spirit. Where in the Bible can they be found?
