



# Deep Within Us

A Personal Retreat with the Holy Spirit

From the Pastoral Center Team

Use this retreat alone or with others. If alone, plan to share some of your outcomes with a Spiritual Friend or Director afterward. If with others, plan to spend considerable time alone but come together at key points to share your journey. If possible, leave your home or parish center to spend time in a quiet place, away from distractions. Turn off the cell phone and leave behind the busyness for a period of time. You may choose to experience this entire retreat in a single morning, a daylong retreat, or as part of your daily prayer over a period of several days.

Take these notes with you. You may also wish to have a Bible and writing instrument. Other than that, take only yourself.

## Session 1 -- Be still

Begin by pausing. Drop your shoulders and allow yourself to just sit. Have at your ready a cup of coffee or tea, and be in a quiet place alone – or quietly with others.

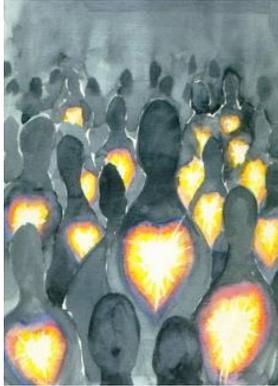
Be quiet until the silence begins to disturb you. Stare off into space, or close your eyes, but let your mind be still. As thoughts enter your consciousness – thoughts of work or stress or upcoming demands, set them aside. Use the space below to jot down a word or two about each distraction. This will allow you to return to them all later, after you have immersed yourself in the Spirit. These items that come to mind for you are worth paying attention to. They may be the ways in which the Spirit leads you to ministry, but they may also be ways in which you are being led toward sin.

What's on your mind? (List things here. Use the back of this page if needed.)

## Allow your mind to turn to the Spirit...

As you become still, gradually allow the Spirit to turn your mind and heart toward God who is Divine Love. Let this turning of the heart be gradual but steady. Even during this experience, you may experience distractions or a lack of consolation. Accept that, Jot down a note if you need to, but go on.

You need not at this point have words to utter toward the Spirit of God, but only an opening of your heart and soul. Rest with this opening, this turning. Rest with it until you are ready to move on. Then quietly to yourself or aloud, read the following passage.



## The Spirit of Divine Love

“Those who bear God’s Spirit,”  
St. Irenaeus once wrote,  
“are led to the Word.”  
It is the Spirit, we believe,  
the Spirit of Divine Love,  
otherwise known as the “Holy Spirit,”  
who first makes belief  
possible in our hearts.

We believe the Spirit of Divine Love  
lives within the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Trinity:

Father,  
Son,  
and Holy Spirit,  
is one God.

From the beginning, it has been this same God  
providing words and deeds  
generating the world and us humans,  
journeying with us down through the centuries,  
revealing the divine heart to us completely through Christ,  
and remaining with us as source of wisdom,  
truth,  
power,  
and helpmate in the Spirit of Love.

The Love which is the Trinity  
is never separated  
and is always one God.

## The mission of Christ and the Spirit are inseparable.

It is the Spirit of this Love  
which opens our hearts  
and forms our innermost being  
to receive Christ  
and to know Christ  
and to share Christ in community.

Here pause to return to your own open heart, allow God's love to dwell within you, to rise up within you like a fountain. Let the Spirit push open the doorway to your soul.

In knowing Christ we know Divine Love itself.  
Indeed, for us humans,  
it is the Trinitarian experience of God  
that is most profound for us.

### **The Works of the Spirit**

The world neither sees nor knows the Spirit,  
according to John's Gospel  
which reflects our whole tradition.

But we can plainly recognize the work of the Spirit:  
Sacred Scripture is written under her guidance,  
and Tradition is likewise guided by her.

The teaching offices of the Church itself depend upon her,  
and it is the Spirit who puts us into communion  
with Christ.

In prayer, it is the Spirit who opens our hearts,  
gives us gifts for the good of the world  
and the Spirit it is who provides the words of witness.

As we said above,  
the Love of the Trinity is inseparable,  
and always works as one God.

And the really glorious part of this story  
is that we, baptized into Christ,  
are ourselves anointed by the Spirit of Love.

And in that Spirit, we become adopted children of God.

Call to mind now those who are closest to you, in life and work. Sense in them the Spirit of God, loving you, guiding you, working with you, forming you. If you wish to do so, jot down the names of those whom you might speak to, in order to thank them for being the incarnation of God's Spirit in your life.

### **How we Name the Spirit**

We give a name to the Spirit of Divine Love  
and that name is "Holy Spirit,"  
a name that conjures up images of breath,

air,  
and wind.  
And the sense that the Spirit is the breath of God,  
and stirs up within us a whirlwind  
of divine love  
is very strong in the Gospels.  
Jesus promises this Spirit to us  
using the name “Spirit of truth”  
and we have a strong tradition of understanding  
that it is this truth that sets us free,  
liberation being at the heart of Jesus’ mission.  
Jesus also refers to this Spirit as “Advocate”  
which means Helper.  
Other names are also applied to the Spirit  
throughout the New Testament  
but all of them refer to one and the same  
Spirit of Divine Love.

## Holy Water

Our initiation into the Church  
which comes to us at Baptism  
occurs under the symbol of water.  
When the woman at the well in chapter 4 of John’s Gospel  
asked Jesus for a drink of water,  
he told her that the water he would give,  
unlike the water in that well,  
would become in her “a spring of water,  
gushing up to eternal life.”

## Let us pray.

**Spend time now writing with God.** If you are a non-writer, jot down notes and words, phrases and single lines, all to help you concretize this experience of the Spirit. This is a “colloquy,” a unique moment when you enter into conversation with God as you would in writing to a friend. Express here your **deepest desires**, and allow the Spirit of God to dwell deep within you. You may use your journal, the back of this page, or any other note pad.

## Session 2: Be Mindful

In our last session, we spent time becoming calm and opening our hearts to the Spirit. As we grow in our ability to pause and hear the Spirit, and to allow the Spirit to counsel and guide us, we gradually grow more and more grateful. We know that each act we undertake in ministry, each sermon we preach, each word of comfort we speak to the ill, imprisoned, or rejected – each of these comes from the Spirit of God.

This requires on our part careful discernment. For just beneath the power and beauty of God lies a powerful force, tempting us to become selfish rather than loving, to use a harsh word rather than a kind one, to condemn rather than affirm, to create chaos rather than holy order within our parish, home, or lives.



## Holy Anointing

It is likewise in the Spirit  
that we are anointed  
in Confirmation.  
The word “Christ” means literally,  
“the one anointed by God’s Spirit.”

It is Christ who now gives that Spirit to us  
Christ is the minister of Confirmation  
with the bishop acting on Christ’s behalf.  
When we speak of Christ and the Spirit  
separately like this,  
it is only to distinguish their unique roles,  
but in fact, we believe they are inseparable  
and always act as one God.

## Holy Fire

Here we come to an experience of Spirit  
that has the power to set the world on fire!  
The Spirit of Divine Love is powerful,  
the *most* powerful force of all,  
which alone can renew the face of the earth.  
“Come Holy Spirit,” we pray,  
“fill the hearts of your faithful  
and kindle in them the fire of your love.”  
The Spirit of Love, indeed. Fire!

## Holy Light

As we humans struggle with our feeble language,  
and attempt to express  
our experience of Holy Spirit,  
one image that seems to speak to us  
is that of Light.

We are “enlightened” by the Spirit  
to recognize truth  
and to know Christ.

Call to mind now those moments of your life when you have experienced the **FIRE** or the **LIGHT** of the Spirit. Quietly think back over your life to this point, searching for those key moments. Let your heart be grateful for them and rest within them.

## Holy Hands

When the ordained lay hands on one another,  
to ordain and bless and heal,  
a powerful sign of the Spirit of Love  
is expressed.

Jesus himself healed the sick  
and blessed the children  
by laying hands on them.

## Holy Dove

As a symbol of the Holy Spirit,  
the dove has symbolically appeared in our Scriptures  
to announce the end of the flood to Noah,  
and to remain with Christ in power  
after his own baptism.

And in sacred art, the dove is a common symbol  
representing the presence of God’s Spirit.

If you are consecrated for religious life or ordained, or if you are married or have committed yourself to a partner, or if you are any of these or single and have committed yourself to a life’s work, recall now how the Spirit prompts you to choose and remain within this holy commitment.

## Holy History

We believe the Spirit of God  
has spoken throughout history  
from the time of Genesis and Exodus  
through the Prophets  
the wisdom writings  
right up to John the Baptist.

In the symbolic language of the creation stories of Genesis,  
it was the Spirit of Divine Love

that hovered over the chaos  
and that was breathed into our nostrils.  
Being formed in the image of God  
is being formed in the image of Divine Love.  
And then from Abraham and Sarah,  
through Isaac and Rebecca,  
to Moses and Miriam,  
to Joshua and the visions of the prophets  
the Spirit of Divine Love has been present.  
This Spirit we believe, is in the Law  
and obeying the Law of Divine Love  
yields a life in the Spirit.  
But to fall away from the Law of Love,  
to be unfaithful to our created purpose,  
ends in death.  
Perhaps this Old Testament work of the Spirit  
came to a peak in the Prophet Isaiah,  
where, in chapter 11, we read  
“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.”  
Later, when Jesus of Nazareth  
was ready to begin his own ministry,  
he quoted this prophet,  
from Isaiah, chapter 61:  
“The spirit of the Lord is upon me,”  
Jesus read according to Luke,  
“because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor...”

## Let us Pray.

We turn now to an exercise in which we will examine how we have allowed the Spirit to direct, not only our life’s vocation but also our daily work.

1. **Become conscious** of the reality that God is present to you right now. You are in the Divine Presence.
2. **Return to your day** – moment by moment or hour by hour. Consider each gift, each trial, each moment that springs back to mind for you now. Walk through the details of your day, looking back over the time with your heart open to the Spirit.
3. **Now ask the Spirit** to enter you fully and honestly. Neither condemn yourself for actions taken or omitted, nor become complacent with your life as you have lived it. Let the energy of the Spirit stimulate you to see with God's eyes.
4. **Test your heart.** This may be the longest of the steps here. "Test yourselves," St. Paul urges, "to see whether you are living in faith; examine yourselves. Perhaps you yourselves do not realize that Christ Jesus is in you." (2 Cor.). In this step, consider each of the events and people in your day with your heart tuned to God. Search for the internal movements of your heart and your interaction with what was before you. Ask what you were involved in and who you were with, and review your hopes and hesitations. Be aware of your mixed motives and emotions and bring them all to God.
5. **Bring it to Jesus.** Finally, as we did in the first session, have a heart to heart conversation with Jesus. Express gratitude for gifts, sorrow for sin, and awareness of grace.



## Session Three: Be in Christ

In each of these exercises, we have grown more open to the Spirit, and more able to hear the Spirit and to test our lives for evidence that we are responding to the prompting of the Spirit deep within us. We have likewise considered the teachings of the Church about the Spirit, the understanding that we Christians have gradually developed over time, as expressed within our own *Catechism*.

In this session, we want to move more deeply into Christ, into his very heart. We do this by “putting on Christ like a garment,” as Paul wrote. We envelop ourselves in his life and energy, and allow him to fill us with grace. This requires a profound openness on our parts. It is the Holy Spirit, coming to us as to the disciples on Pentecost, who makes this possible.

Begin this session with these three steps:

1. **Be still** once again, repeating the steps of the first session. Allow yourself to be mindful of the presence of the Spirit who is with you now. God is present.
2. **Be mindful** once again, as in the second session, of God’s hand in your daily life, of the Spirit moving and shaking you. Be conscious that God is acting in your life.
3. **Be in Christ** now. Offer him this day, this hour. In your waking moments during the night, let your heart turn to him. Listen to his voice in your depths. Be in Christ.



When you are ready, prayerfully and consciously read this reflection.

### The Spirit in the New Testament

And then, in due time,  
there was John the Baptist who,  
as the text of Luke tells us,  
was filled with the Holy Spirit.  
There is consistent belief in our Scriptures  
that John was “a witness who came  
to testify to the light.”

In him, the Spirit of Divine Love  
completes the preparations for Christ,  
the anointed one.

## The Holy Spirit makes the Church holy.

The First Letter of John reminds us that  
"God is Love."

God is indeed Divine Love, never ending,  
generous  
forgiving  
love shared with us all.

It is the understanding of the Church  
as expressed by Paul in Romans, chapter 5,  
that the first gift of the Spirit of Divine Love  
is love itself  
"poured into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit  
who has been given to us."

It is this love which restores us.  
It is this love which Jesus refused to surrender.  
It is this love which has Divine Love as its source.  
It is this love which the Spirit gives us.

Speaking on behalf of the believing church,  
the writer of the First Letter of John  
provides a helpful commentary on this:  
"No one has ever seen God," the writer reminds us  
in chapter 4, verse 12,  
"if we love one another,  
God lives in us  
and [Divine Love] is perfected in us."

The more we live in this love,  
the more we donate ourselves to others,  
the more we forgive over and over,  
the more we share our daily bread with the poor,  
the more we are patient,  
kind,  
faithful,  
and gentle of heart,  
the more we live in the Spirit.

The Church, then, the Body of Christ,

is God's holy people walking together  
enlightened for faith by the Spirit of Love.  
The Church, we might say, therefore,  
is primarily a sacrament,  
bearing witness to all these truths,  
caring for the sick, rejected, and poor,  
living according to the teachings of Christ  
and welcoming all into the power of love.

## The Church reflects the love of the Trinity.

It is a sacrament of the Trinity of Divine Love  
in communion with us all!  
We are not set side by side collectively as Church  
but we are bound together  
by the same principle: the Spirit of Love.  
Christ the Son of Divine Love  
releases into our own hearts  
the Spirit of Love which so fills his own.  
Through the sacraments, Christ acts in our midst  
to unify,  
strengthen,  
heal,  
and in short, make holy the members of the Church.

### Let us Pray

We turn now to prayer. We bring to Christ all the concerns and joys of our hearts, and. Be grateful for the gifts you have received in the Holy Spirit. Be willing to use those gifts for the sake of the Reign of God. We sorry for selfishness and sinfulness. And be open to Grace. It is being offered to you in this very moment. Write your prayer on the following page, being deeply honest about your needs.

### In conclusion.

We invite you to take away from this retreat the gains you have made. Each time we immerse ourselves in the Holy Spirit, we come away with insights, new energy, a greater desire to love others, or a stronger sense of contrition. What are the gifts which you have received?

## We close with Sacred Scripture.

Because the *Catechism*, whose teachings we have allowed to enter our hearts in this retreat, is based in Sacred Scripture, it is fitting that we close with this lovely passage from John 14: 12-13 (NRSV).

Very truly I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do **greater works than these**, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may ever be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, **I will do it.**

The words above which you have prayerfully read and absorbed are a summary of articles 683-747 of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, rendered here in plain English and excerpted from *Growing Faith*, booklet #16.

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