

Saints Alive!

A Periodic Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

Issue
27

Life, Without The Holy Spirit?

By Rich Cleveland

“...the Holy Spirit is the essential ingredient that makes us distinctively Christian, the absence of which would change our life beyond recognition or description.”

The Holy Spirit was there when God created the heavens and the earth, he was there at Jesus’ Incarnation, he was there at Pentecost when the Church was formed, yet he is often not there in our consciousness as we live our lives. It is hard to think of an analogy that would depict what the Christian life would be like without the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the closest analogy would be to picture the chaos and impotency that would come if language, verbal and non-verbal, were suddenly to cease existing. One can only begin to imagine the sense of hopelessness we would experience not being able to communicate with even one other person. The powerlessness would be over-whelming. We would be unable to accomplish much of anything. There would be no information system, no books, and no written instructions on how to do things. The sense of isolation and dislocation would be unbearable. Love, appreciation and belonging would not be able to be expressed or received. Needs would not be able to be communicated nor could help be provided. Communication, one of the essential elements that make us distinctively human, when removed, would change life beyond recognition or description.

Similar to the above example, the Holy Spirit is the essential ingredient that makes us distinctively Christian, the absence of which would change our life beyond recognition or description. To appreciate the Holy Spirit’s presence, we must think for a minute of what life would be like without him; if history was suddenly turned back, and the Holy Spirit was removed. How would our Christian life be different? Well, there would be:

- **No belonging**— *“But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.”* (Romans 8:9) The Holy Spirit prevents that helpless, hopeless feeling that makes us feel so alone, and like no one cares. The Spirit enables us to experience the peace of being connected to Christ. He fulfills Jesus’ promise to send to us a Comforter so that we would not feel like orphans, enabling us to pray, “Abba, Father.”
- **No assurance**— *“In him you... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it...”* (Eph. 1:13,14) Jesus came to assure us of the Father’s love, and the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and the Son was sent to seal our salvation and enable us to live in light of that love. “Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:21–22)
- **No revelation (Scripture)**— *“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* (John 14:26) St. John also said in John 21:25 that “there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself

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“Relying on the Holy Spirit requires the spiritual maturity to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, and to habitually follow him through life.”

Emmaus Journey

MISSION:

Emmaus Journey is a lay Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry which partners with parishes, small groups and individuals to facilitate a personal encounter with and conversion to Christ, thereby forming missionary disciples actively living for Jesus.

VISION:

By encountering Christ through scripture, discipleship and community—individuals experience: 1) conversion to Christ; 2) transformation in Christ; and 3) mobilization for Christ, where they are actively involved in sharing their faith with others and living out their faith in the greater community. Thus achieving Goal One of the USCCB's initiative on evangelization, “To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.”



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From the Heart

By Mike Dill

I recall a cutting remark made many years ago by a friend who came to me for advice on a significant life decision. Without recalling the specifics of the decision, I can say it would impact her daily experiences for months to come. “Have you prayed about it?” I asked her. Even though she identified as a believer, had serious angst over her decision, and had come to me for advice, she didn’t hesitate to scoff at my question, and retorted, “What? Should I pray about whether to eat a sandwich?” Her question was rhetorical, and her tone was dismissive of my advice.

My friend’s retort reflected a larger culture that prevails even in the Church today. In our desire to live orderly, predictable lives, it can feel perilous to live like God is actively involved in our lives. To enter into relationship with another living being is to accept *chaos* into your own life, because you cannot control or always predict what the other person will do. So, we tend to drift into a sort of *therapeutic deism*, where we live by moral principles, and draw peace from the idea that God forgives us, but we don’t grant Jesus Lordship over our lives. We don’t consult God before going into battle, as David did. We don’t speak to him personally, because we have come to expect that he doesn’t speak personally to us.

This hollow spirituality can be explained by a particular shortfall in our maturity. We begin in infancy by learning the static *rules* of faith: “Thou shalt not...” As we mature, we acquire the ability to reason and understand more complex *principles* that can be applied differently based on the circumstances: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” But invariably, life leads us to situations where even the principles cannot help us. The principles will sometimes even conflict with each other, or we will find competing desires within us for which there are no principles to resolve. The ultimate call of Christianity is not to follow mere *principles*, but an actual *person*. Relying on the Holy Spirit requires the spiritual maturity to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, and to habitually follow him through life. (John 10:27) We do this especially through silent prayer, wherein we listen and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. (Luke 10:42 NIV)

Recently, while running errands here in Colorado, I used a coupon to buy two burgers for the price of one. Man, I really like burgers. After finishing the first burger, the second sat on my passenger seat, like a precious companion with whom I couldn’t wait to become acquainted. I was listening to a homily as I drove, and as I pulled up to a stoplight, the speaker issued a point of challenge: “What is Jesus calling you to give up?”

Looking up I saw a man with a cardboard sign begging for money on the street corner. In an instant, the Spirit made it clear what I needed to do: say goodbye to the “companion” in my passenger seat. I rolled down my window, held up the bag with the burger in it, and asked the man if he wanted it.

“Heck yeah!” he replied with a big smile and approached to take the gift. I don’t share this story because I think it’s some big deal to give a man a burger, but *precisely because it’s such a small thing*. It illustrates that the Spirit is intimately involved in all our lives. The Holy Spirit isn’t just guiding us in large decisions, but is living through us in everyday decisions, like whether to eat a sandwich. As the prophet Isaiah spoke, “Whether you turn to the left or to the right, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it.’ (Isaiah 30:21 NIV)



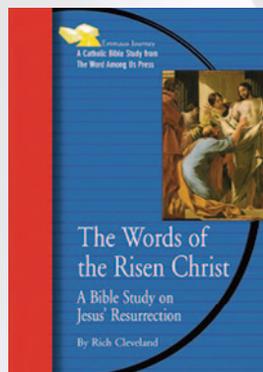
Mike Dill

Mike Dill and his wife Rachel are Emmaus Journey staff. The Dills have three children. As Emmaus Journey staff, Mike seeks to catalyze evangelization and discipleship through Catholic communities. Mike also serves as a major in the United States Army Reserves. They live in Colorado Springs, Colorado and are members of Holy Apostles Catholic Church.

The Words of the Risen Christ

Enter Into the Hearts and Minds of the Disciples

Jesus' final words after His resurrection, such as "Go make disciples" and "Peace be with you," set the tone for each of the eight sessions of this Bible study. They help participants explore themes such as community, reconciliation, the power of the Holy Spirit and the call to evangelization.



The Words of the Risen Christ will enable you as an individual or in a small group setting to enter into the hearts and minds of the disciples as they joyfully discover that Jesus is not dead but has risen.

This Bible study consists of eight enlightening sessions. Each session features:

- Scripture Text
- A Commentary
- A Series of Reflective Questions
- A Prayer
- A Call to Action

This Bible study was written as a follow-up study to *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, participants of this study will resonate with the disciples as they come to grips with their disappointments and shortcomings. And they will also exult with these same disciples when they experience Jesus' love, forgiveness, and companionship.



Topic: His Spirit

Verses: John 14:26 and 1 Corinthians 2:12

Reflection on the Wisdom of the Church

The Scripture speaks of walking (living) in the flesh and walking (living) in the Spirit. When most of us think of living in the flesh, we usually understand this to mean issues of immorality, carnality, and illicit sexuality. But it is more complex than that. Very moral and upright Christian church-goers can live the majority of their lives in the flesh by simply being self-willed and self-reliant. On the other hand, living in the Spirit need not be thought of as a super-spiritual or mystical experience when it is simply conscious awareness of the Holy Spirit, submission to his will, and reliance on his help.

Christ has given us no greater resource than the Holy Spirit. So great is this resource that Jesus said, “it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you” (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit provides enlightenment to our minds and strengthens our will to understand and respond to the Gospel. He affirms our faith by sealing our salvation with his presence and making us receptive to renewal and transformation. He imbues us with the fruit of his presence and gifts us to be responsible stewards in Christ’s mission.

The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console. The Spirit comes to enlighten the mind first of the one who receives him, and then, through him, the minds of others as well. ¹

We would do well to follow the advice of Pope (Saint) John Paul II’s father gave him, which was to begin each day praying, “Come Holy Spirit.”

Questions for Meditation

John 14:26

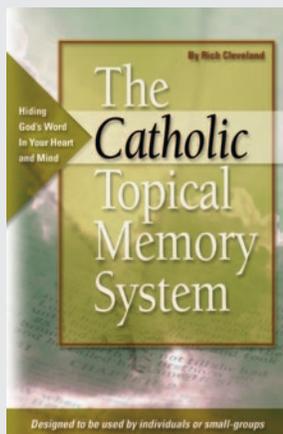
(For context read John 14:21–27)

- Where do you see evidence for the Trinity in this passage?
- What does the name “Counselor” communicate to you?
- What other names for the Holy Spirit are you aware of?
- How are the Holy Spirit’s actions in this verse valuable to the Church and the individual?

1 Corinthians 2:12

(For context read 1 Corinthians 2:6–16)

- From where or from whom comes spiritual insight and wisdom?
- How do we either cooperate with the Holy Spirit or resist him in coming to know the things given to us of God?
- How would you describe your attentiveness to the Holy Spirit?
- How can you increase your sensitivity to him?



1. From a catechetical instruction by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, LOH Vol. II, page 968

Life, Without The Holy Spirit?

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“Thank God, that he never gives us all we ask for, and that he doesn’t only give us that for which we ask. Instead we know that in our confusion, distress, and complexity, we can pour out our hearts before God, and the Holy Spirit will help our prayers to be received in accordance with God’s will, and for our benefit as well.”

could not contain the books that would be written.” How were his disciples to remember what he said, and interpret what he meant? It would be an overwhelming impossibility without the coming of the Holy Spirit to remind them of what Jesus said, and throughout the centuries teach them what he meant. (The “them” used here refers to the Church to whom the promise of revelation was given.)

- **No illumination**— “So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10–13) The Holy Spirit also enables us, now many centuries later, to hear, read, study, meditate on, and apply sacred Scripture with understanding, due to the Holy Spirit’s illumination. It is significant to note that part of this illumination is the wisdom gained from the Church over the centuries.
- **No power in prayer**— “... we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words... the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26,27) Thank God, that he never gives us all we ask for, and that he doesn’t only give us that for which we ask. Instead we know that in our confusion, distress, and complexity, we can pour out our hearts before God, and the Holy Spirit will help our prayers to be received in accordance with God’s will, and for our benefit as well.
- **No power to witness**— “... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.” (Acts 1:8) The Church was birthed in a time when persecution and cruelty toward Christians were commonplace, and into a world whose

first response to the Good News was often hostile, or at best indifferent—yet, we are told to take the Gospel to these people—the world. Consequently, there is a natural reluctance and apprehension to do so, however, the Holy Spirit can both strengthen our resolve, and prepare the hearts of those to whom we are to speak the Good News. The Holy Spirit is still actively involved in birthing the Church into people’s hearts, as Saint Pope John Paul II points out, “In our day too, the Spirit is the principal agent of the new evangelization. Hence it will be important to gain a renewed appreciation of the Spirit as the One who builds the Kingdom of God within the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ, stirring people’s hearts and quickening in our world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time.”²

These are just a few of the things made possible to us by the Holy Spirit’s presence. The reality is that we often live as though the Holy Spirit isn’t in our lives, oblivious to him. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit was given to us who are the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit’s presence will remain with us until Jesus returns. We can more fully express our appreciation for the Holy Spirit by opening our heart and life anew to his indwelling presence. Join me in praying during these coming weeks of Lent and the Easter Season the following:

*“Breathe on me breath of God
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love the things you love,
And do what you would do.*

*Breathe on me breath of God,
Until our hearts are pure,
Until with you we have one will,
To live and to endure.”³*

After thirty-five years as evangelicals, Rich Cleveland and his wife Gail became Catholic. Rich is the founder of Emmaus Journey, and he and his wife continue to serve Emmaus Journey, and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

1. All passages used within this article are taken from the RSVCE.

2. *On the Coming of the Third Millennium*, by Pope John Paul II, (45).

3. Adapted from a hymn by Edwin Hatch, appearing in *Liturgy of the Hours, Vol II*.