

THE APOSTLE'S CREED I BELIEVE-CREDO

WEEK FIVE: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church

I believe in the Holy Spirit

It is important to make sure we understand who, and what is, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He is sometimes described as the 'executive arm' of the Trinity.

If we go back to Genesis 1:1-2 it says:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. (NLT)

The Holy Spirit was active in creation and throughout the Old Testament there are over 90 references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit:

Numbers 27:18, Judges 3:10 and 34, 2 Samuel 23:2, Job 26:13, Psalm 104:30, and 143:10, Ecclesiastes 26:7, Isaiah 11:1-5 and 32:15, Joel 2:28-29

– are just a few of those scriptures.

- Has reading these verses given you a fuller understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit? Write down any questions that you have and when you have opportunity, discuss these with a Christian friend.

In the New Testament, we see the Holy Spirit working in a different way. From the time when the Angel Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and she would conceive a son, and Simeon who had a revelation by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, we see the Holy Spirit working in new and powerful ways.

- Read Luke 3:15-22, and Luke 4:1;15. What happened to Jesus in these verses?
- Read again verse 14 and 15, described as the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. What important lesson does this teach us?

Read John 14:15-17 and 25-27

John 14 explains the provision God made for when Jesus left this earth. The Holy Spirit is portrayed as God's personal presence with us.

- How do you see the Holy Spirit working in your life? Some of the following words may help you to articulate this: a comforter, a teacher, a forever-present friend.
- Can you think of any specific examples when you know you have been led or helped in some way, by the Holy Spirit? Write them down as reminders for the future.

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Read Luke 24:44-49

Notice how Jesus reminds the disciples that what has happened was foretold in the Scriptures.

- What do you think was happening in verse 45?

If you have any doubts about the existence and power of the Holy Spirit, read Acts 2:1-13. This is what God had spoken about in Joel chapter 2:28-29. By sending the Holy Spirit God was giving them, and us, the power, the ability TO DO the work of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus was no longer physically around to heal the sick and perform miracles but through the power of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, God has empowered us. Remember John 14:16-17, where Jesus promised that we would do greater things. By this I understand him to mean in the scope of what we are able to do. 'All nations', as understood by the disciples, was a much smaller world than we know. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. They would have had no idea of what was in store for them. BUT, they were obedient and 120, including the disciples, the women who followed Jesus, Mary his mother and his brothers, were gathered together in an upper room in prayer and supplications.

- What strikes you about the first verse of chapter 2? Can we learn from this?

Read Acts 2:14-47

Think back to Peter after the betrayal of Jesus. He who said he would never forsake him, no matter what anyone else did! Peter was broken, disheartened and, even after the resurrection, decided to go back fishing.

- What things strike you about the wonderful sermon Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost? List the statements you think are important.
- What was birthed on that day?

Read Acts 3

If anything can persuade us of the power of the Holy Spirit to change and enthuse us, it surely is this chapter.

- What were the qualifications of Peter and John enabling them to bring healing to the man in Solomon's Porch?

If you are struggling in your Christian life, doubting that God can use you, or bring you through difficult circumstances, or renew your love for Jesus, then read the whole of the book of Acts. It's not always a pretty story. The sufferings of the followers of Jesus were terrible. They were, in the case of Stephen (Chapter 7), martyred, others imprisoned, beaten, harassed in every way possible. It is though, a book of excitement, teaching, warning but above all, a book that shows us what God can do in the lives of ordinary people who are prepared to commit their lives to his service.

Jesus said (John 16:13) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

- If you had doubts about Holy Spirit, has this stirred your faith and encouraged you to trust God's word?
- Has it shown you that God can use any follower of Jesus who is willing to serve?
- What in particular has spoken to you?

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I BELIEVE...IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

It is important to be clear that the word CATHOLIC here means the universal Church of God; it is not referring to a particular denomination, i.e the Roman Catholic Church. Even the 16th century Protestant reformers understood they were to be part of 'the holy catholic church' despite having broken away from the Roman Catholic church. That means that whoever believes the statement of this Apostles' Creed, is part of the holy catholic church. As such, we should do everything we can to be united and work with our fellow believers to see the Kingdom on God grow in our personal lives and the life of the church on earth.. The well-known hymn puts it clearly:

Verse 1.

The church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is His new creation, by water and the Word;
from heav'n He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.

Verse 6.

Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.

The Living Stone and a Chosen People | Peter 2:4-6

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

- Have you considered that you are part of something so much bigger than yourself?
- How has this information and scripture helped you to understand your part in the Church?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- Think about your role in the Body of Christ, the Church. No matter the length of time you have been a Christian, you are a member of this body, a living stone, and we all have a vital role to play. If you are not sure about your role, pray, read God's word, talk to other Christians. God will show you at the right time what he wants of you.

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You are not just, "one more brick in the wall", you are chosen, you are precious, you are valued, read what God's word says about you:



"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

Prayer

Father thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be my special helper at all times. May my life be full of the Spirit, radiating the love of Jesus, and help me to work to build your church. Amen.