

Article 36

The Distinctness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Everett's youth minister always started prayer by saying, "Father, God, we come before you today . . ." Everett thought about it, and the next day in religion class, he asked his teacher, "Why only pray to God the Father, if the Son and the Holy Spirit are also equal persons in the Trinity?" She explained there are different situations in which people may feel more comfortable praying to the Son or to the Holy Spirit. She confided that she was often nervous speaking in front of colleagues. "I just take a deep breath and ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and provide me with the right words to say. I trust that the Holy Spirit will work through me to bring the right message. If it were me alone, I might be too nervous to speak at all!"

"When would you pray to Jesus?" Everett asked. "Remember all that Jesus suffered in his Passion?" his teacher asked. "When you are suffering, or struggling, or feel like an outsider, pray to Jesus. He knows exactly how you feel. God hears all of your prayers. Just pray in the way that is most comfortable for you."

MAKE IT SO

Some people are under the mistaken belief that we first receive the Holy Spirit and his gifts at Confirmation. However, we first receive the Holy Spirit at our Baptism. Then at Confirmation, we receive a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his gifts are strengthened and increased within us. So even if you are not yet confirmed, you still have gifts to live out your faith. Take another look at the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Which ones might you call on to live out your faith more fully?



God the Father

When we profess that God is our Father, we acknowledge that he is the Eternal Source of all life; that all creation, visible and invisible, exists because of him. We also acknowledge that God is all-powerful and desires to be in an intimate, loving relationship with his creation. He loves us, cares for us, provides for us, heals us, forgives us, and is just and faithful. Even if the love of an earthly father—or mother, or friend, or any other person—disappoints us, God’s love will never fail us.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we learn that Jesus came to teach us more about our Heavenly Father: “No one knows the son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (11:27). So, what did Jesus reveal to us about the Father? In the Gospels, Jesus calls God *Abba*, which, in his native language of Aramaic, means “Father” and has the loving sense of intimacy. This reveals two things about Jesus’ relationship with God the Father. First, it reveals that Jesus’ relationship with God is **filial**—that is, a father-son relationship that is from all eternity. As a result, we began to understand God as Father in terms of his being the First Person of the Trinity, the Eternal Father of the Eternal Son. Second, the loving sense of the word *Abba* shows us the intimate nature of the relationship between the Father and Son. Not all father-son relationships are ideal, so Jesus’ relationship with his Father is the perfect example for all of us. It shows us how children should love their parents and how parents should love their children.



Jesus calls God *Abba*, meaning Father.

Jesus does more than teach us about his loving Father and give us an example of right relationships. He actually invites us to call God “Father” ourselves. We see this most clearly when he teaches his disciples to pray the Our Father (see Matthew 6:9–15). Jesus invites us into the intimate relationship he has with his Divine Father—into the communion of the Holy Trinity. What an honor that Jesus is inviting us to share in the loving community of the Trinity. We can do so because through Baptism we become God the Father’s adopted daughters and sons. Saint Paul writes:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:15–17)

This does not mean that God cares for us only if we are baptized. On the one hand, the Church affirms the necessity of Baptism for salvation. On the other hand, we believe that God’s infinite love and tender mercy extend to all people, even in ways we cannot fully understand.

CATHOLICS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

[Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity](#) wasn’t always so saintly. In fact, she was described as a holy terror as a toddler. She once shouted: “Bad priest! Bad priest! That’s my doll!” at a priest who had borrowed her doll to be used in a Nativity scene. Elizabeth was deeply touched at her First Communion and Confirmation, and she made the bold decision at that young age to take a vow of chastity and become a Carmelite nun. Elizabeth’s mother sent her to parties and arranged for boys to pursue her, in hopes that she would marry instead. Elizabeth eventually entered a Carmelite convent in 1901. Her greatest desire was to be enveloped by the Trinity and to surrender to God’s love. She died only five years later, at the age of twenty-six, from Addison’s disease. Before her death, Elizabeth wrote that it would increase her joy in Heaven if people would ask for her help. Pope Francis declared her a saint in 2016.

God the Son

The Second Person of the Trinity is God the Son, Jesus Christ, who assumed a human nature for our salvation. Recall that when we studied the Gospel of John we learned that Jesus Christ is eternally begotten, meaning he has existed with the Father since before time began. Just as the Father is God, Jesus Christ is God too. He is also the Incarnate Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, both fully God and fully human. The Incarnate Son of God is the perfection of what it means to be human, which makes him the ideal person for us to imitate. The work that is proper to Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is redemption or salvation. Jesus Christ is our **Savior**. Even Jesus' name in Hebrew points to his role as our Savior because it means, "God saves." What does it mean to call Christ our Savior? First, it means he came to reconcile us to himself because sin had separated humanity from God. Second, it means that he came to reveal God's divine love to us and show us how to be holy. Third, it means he came into the world so that we might share in the divine life as adopted sons and daughters of God.



Couldn't Christ have entered the world as an adult, fully ready to begin his ministry? Why was it necessary for him to enter the world as an infant?

We also call Jesus Christ our **Redeemer**. *Redeemer* is not a word frequently used today outside of Church discussions, so we need to look back at the ancient Roman world to understand its true meaning. In the first century, a “ransom” was the price paid to buy the freedom of a slave. The person who paid the ransom was known as a *redeemer*. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the early Christians began to reflect on the meaning of the death of Jesus, and borrowed this concept from the Roman world (remember, they were living in the Roman Empire). They were also aware of Old Testament prophecies promising that God would save the people from their sin. Therefore, the early Christians taught that Jesus had “paid the price” to “ransom” us from our slavery to sin; therefore, Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, is truly our Redeemer.

God the Holy Spirit

The Third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Nicene Creed, the Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the giver of life who proceeds from the Father and Son.” The Holy Spirit had been active in salvation history, but in a humble way. The Holy Spirit never points to himself; instead, he directs us to, and reveals, the Father and Christ, his Word.

In fact, the second verse of the Bible already alludes to the Holy Spirit! This verse says there was “a mighty wind sweeping over the waters” (Genesis 1:2). The Hebrew word for *wind* is the same word used for *breath*. The Holy Spirit is often equated with breath or wind. So it is the Holy Spirit, as God’s breath, that brings order out of the waters of chaos. It is the Holy Spirit who speaks to God’s people through the ancient prophets and who anoints Jesus for his special mission to redeem and save us. However, the Holy Spirit is not fully revealed until after Jesus’ death and Resurrection.

Recall reading in John’s Gospel that when Jesus knows that the hour of his death is near, he promises his disciples that he will ask God to send them an **Advocate** (in Greek, *Paraclete*; see John 14:16–17). An advocate is someone who is on our side to help us, strengthen us, and empower us for holiness. This Advocate that Jesus promised is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples that the Spirit would teach them everything they need to know (see verse 26).

Redeemer One who frees others from distress, harm, captivity, or the consequences of sin; specifically, Jesus Christ.

Advocate ► Another name for the Holy Spirit. The Third Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity, the personal love of Father and Son for each other. Also called the Paraclete and the Spirit of Truth.

After Jesus dies and rises from the dead, he makes good on his promise. The Risen Lord appears to the disciples, breathes on them, and says, “Receive the holy Spirit” (John 20:22). When we study the Acts of the Apostles, we will learn that at **Pentecost** Jesus sends the Holy Spirit, now fully revealed, to be with his disciples forever—both those who were his earliest followers and for us today.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies the People of God by offering us seven gifts to help us as we strive to live as Christians. Receiving the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** means that the mission of Jesus becomes the mission of the Church. In fact, it becomes *our* mission. Through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to be true followers of Christ. When we seek to use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we allow the Holy Spirit to form in us the **fruits of the Holy Spirit**. They are called fruits, because they are the firstfruits of our eternal glory, the signs of what is to come in Heaven.



Notice the use of light and color in this painting of Pentecost. What is the artist highlighting with these effects?

Pentecost ► The fiftieth day following Easter, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and Mary.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit ► At Baptism, we receive seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts are freely given to us to help us live as followers of Jesus and to build up the Body of Christ, the Church. The seven gifts are wisdom, understanding, right judgment or counsel, fortitude or courage, knowledge, piety or reverence, and fear of the Lord or wonder and awe.

fruits of the Holy Spirit ► When we cooperate with the graces and gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit, we see the effect of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives in special qualities and attitudes that we develop as we grow in faith. The twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wisdom	Opens our eyes to see God's plan for the world and helps us follow his plan until our ultimate union with him in Heaven.
Understanding	Makes it possible for us to follow the correct course of action in difficult or confusing situations.
Counsel	Also called Right Judgment; helps us to know right from wrong and to choose the good consistently.
Fortitude	Also called Courage; enables us to do the right things, even when we are afraid.
Knowledge	Empowers us to use our intellect to learn more about our faith.
Piety	Also called Reverence; reminds us that God is God, and enables us to recognize that all we are, all we do, and all we have comes from God.
Fear of the Lord	Also called Wonder and Awe; fills us with a spirit of profound respect as we marvel at God's power and goodness.

HMMMMMM.

How might you pray in a slightly different way to each Person of the Holy Trinity?

TEACHER NOTE

Consider using the PowerPoint presentation “Chapter 9 Overview: Jesus Reveals God as Trinity” (TX006243) to review and summarize the main points of the chapter (see www.smp.org/livejesus_newtestament).

LIVE JESUS IN OUR HEARTS

Jesus Reveals God as Trinity

Jesus Christ and the New Testament
Unit 3, Chapter 9

TX006243

9. **Consider** a prayerful, reflective follow-up to this learning experience by providing time in class for students to journal their thoughts about their images of God and how and when they pray to God and each distinct Person of the Trinity. Play some meditative instrumental music and allow some silence and attention to breathing to help the students “center themselves” before beginning to write. Collect these reflections and use parts of them (anonymously or with permission of the students) during class prayer. Or ask the students to read them as part of student-led prayer.

Empathize

LEARNING EXPERIENCE 6 (Chapter 9)

“Heads Up, Seven Up” with the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Use the classroom game “Heads Up, Seven Up” to reinforce the names and meanings of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit while affirming those gifts in the students. (U2, Q2)

1. **Prepare** by ensuring that all the students have read article 36 in the student book prior to this learning experience. Photocopy or download and print the handout “Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit” (TX006024), on pages 166–167. Cut out the names of the Gifts with the explanation. Fold the slips in half, and place them in a basket or container. Make a two-sided handout with the handout “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit” on one side and “The Fruits of the Holy Spirit” on the other side, one for each student.

TEACHER NOTE

The students will need a copy of the handout during the game to identify a fruit of the Holy Spirit that results from the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 9: Jesus Reveals God as Trinity 209

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UNIT 3

Article 36

Jesus Christ and the New Testament

Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Gifts of the Holy Spirit	
Wisdom	Opens our eyes to see God at work even in our common, everyday experiences.
Understanding	Makes it possible for us to follow the correct course of action in difficult or confusing situations.
Counsel	Also called Right Judgment, helps us to know right from wrong and to choose the good consistently.
Fortitude	Also called Courage, enables us to do the right things, even when we are afraid.
Knowledge	Empowers us to use our intellect to learn more about our faith.
Piety	Also called Reverence, reminds us that God is God, and enables us to recognize that all we are, all we do, and all we have comes from God.
Fear of the Lord	Also called Wonder and Awe; fills us with a spirit of profound respect as we marvel at God’s power and goodness.

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Live Jesus in Our Hearts Series

Document # 1

TX006024

UNIT 3

2. **Explain** the following from article 36 of the student book, using these or similar words:
 - We have already received the Holy Spirit and his gifts at Baptism, even while we anticipate their fullness after Confirmation.
 - This activity will help you become more aware of how each of you and your peers use these gifts—maybe without even realizing it. The Holy Spirit works that way—mysteriously but powerfully.
 - We can experience the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in a more real way when we consider the fruits of those gifts, the qualities of a person that indicate that she or he is living in a Spirit filled way.
3. **Review** the rules of “Heads Up, Seven Up,” using the following or similar words (most students will be familiar with this game, often played in elementary or middle school):
 - In this “Gifts of the Holy Spirit” version of “Heads Up, Seven Up,” seven chosen volunteers will come to the front, and everyone else will put their heads down, eyes closed. No peeking!
 - Each of the seven volunteers will pick one Gift of the Holy Spirit from the container, while everyone else’s heads are down, eyes closed. Without showing anyone which gift they have, they will move among you and each tap one person (on the shoulder gently) they think demonstrates this gift. They must be prepared to tell something specific and positive about the person they tapped, share how that person exemplifies the gift, and then give an example of a fruit of the Spirit that could be associated with the gift.
 - If you are tapped, put your thumb up while keeping your head down until all the volunteers are done. Then I will say, “Heads Up, Seven Up,” and you will stand. You will then try to guess who tapped you. If you guess correctly, the person who tapped you will state the Gift of the Spirit and the fruit of that gift that you possess, giving a specific example from what they know about you. If you don’t guess correctly, you will remain seated and will have the opportunity to be chosen again.

TEACHER NOTE

If a student is unable to guess the second time they are chosen, have the student who tapped them identify themselves and say what Gift of the Holy Spirit they have seen in them. The student who guessed incorrectly does not become one who selects others, but they do get to hear what gift the other student sees in them. This is a crucial point in affirming the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in all of the students in the class. For example, a volunteer might say, “I chose Nathan for the Gift of Knowledge because he seems to be very intelligent, and the fruit of that gift is that he is patient when he helps or tutors others.” Then the two students will change places. If they are incorrect, they do not change places. After every tapped person has had a chance to guess, the slips of paper with the gifts go back into the container for the next round.

Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

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Fruits of the Holy Spirit	
Charity	Joy
Peace	Patience
Kindness	Goodness
Generosity	Gentleness
Faithfulness	Modesty
Self-control	Chastity

