Session 1 · The Promised Spirit

John 14:15-17, 25-26; John 16:7-15; Acts 2:1-13

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the Holy Spirit is not a force or a feeling but a divine Person, promised by Jesus, sent at Pentecost, and given to dwell in each of the baptized.

Catholic Touchstone. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, adored and glorified with the Father and the Son (Nicene Creed; CCC 685). Everything this study will say about fruits and gifts rests on this: a Person, not a power, is at work in us.

What You Need to Know

Jesus spends his final evening preparing the apostles for his departure, and the heart of that preparation is a promise: another Counselor will come (John 14:16). The Greek word is Parakletos, one called alongside, an advocate. "Another" is the load-bearing word: another Counselor besides Jesus, continuing his own personal advocacy in the disciples. Who this Counselor fully is, the Church confesses from the whole sweep of Scripture: a divine Person, adored and glorified with the Father and the Son.

At Pentecost the promise lands in fire and wind (Acts 2). Luke reaches for the great signs of Sinai, and the Church is born as the new covenant people. From this day forward the normal Christian life is life in the Spirit, which is exactly where Saint Paul will take us in Session 2. That indwelling is a communion to remain in. Mortal sin destroys sanctifying grace and the communion with God proper to that grace. But this does not mean that the Holy Spirit stops calling us back: he gives us helps toward repentance, called actual graces, so that we can turn back to God and seek Reconciliation (CCC 1861, 2000-2001). Session 3 will explain mortal sin and the sacrament of Confession more fully.

Be ready for the "force" misunderstanding. Many people picture the Spirit as electricity, an impersonal energy God switches on. The texts will not allow it: the Spirit teaches, reminds, speaks, and can be grieved. Only a person does these things. Let the group find those verbs themselves before you name the doctrine.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The Spirit does not first appear at Pentecost. He broods over the waters of creation (Genesis 1:2), fills craftsmen and judges and kings, and speaks through the prophets. Two promises set up everything: Ezekiel 36:26-27, where God pledges a new heart and says "I will put my Spirit within you," and Joel 2:28, the very text Saint Peter opens his mouth to quote on Pentecost morning: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh."

God gave true grace to his people under the old covenant; what the prophets promise is something more: the Spirit's empowering presence, once given selectively for particular missions, poured out interiorly on the whole people as a shared inheritance. Pentecost is not an innovation. It is a fulfillment on which the prophets had staked their hope.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Catechetical Lectures 16.12 (summary)

Instructing candidates for baptism, St. Cyril compares the one Spirit to water: rain falls the same everywhere, yet becomes white in the lily, red in the rose, producing a different beauty in each living thing it enters. So the one Spirit, entering different souls, produces different graces while remaining himself undivided.

The image is his gift to this whole study: one Spirit, many fruits, many gifts.

St. Basil the Great

On the Holy Spirit (summary)

Writing against those who demoted the Spirit to a creature, St. Basil argued from the Church's baptismal faith: we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one name, one divine rank. His defense helped articulate what the Council of Constantinople would confess in the Creed: the Spirit "adored and glorified" with the Father and the Son.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Against Heresies 3.24.1 (summary)

St. Irenaeus taught that where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every grace. The Spirit and the Church are not rivals or alternatives: where one is, the other is reliably found. (The beloved image of the Spirit as the soul of the Church belongs to later tradition, St. Augustine preaching that what the soul is to our body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ.)

Catechism Connection

CCC 683-686 opens the Catechism's treatment of the Spirit: no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us.

CCC 731-732 on Pentecost: the Holy Trinity is fully revealed, and the Kingdom announced by Christ is opened to those who believe in him.

CCC 737-741 describes the Spirit's mission in the Church: he prepares us, manifests Christ to us, makes Christ present, and unites us to him, so that we can bear "much fruit." Keep that last phrase in your pocket; the group will meet it again in Session 8.

CCC 2000-2001 distinguishes sanctifying grace, the stable gift of divine life that makes us pleasing to God, from actual graces: God's interventions that prompt conversion and sustain our turning back to him. Even the first step of return is his help, which is why mortal sin never means the Spirit has stopped calling (CCC 1861).

CCC 1266, 1285, 1302-1303 for the closing question: we receive the Holy Spirit with sanctifying grace in Baptism, and Confirmation deepens baptismal grace and strengthens us to bear witness to Christ. One

sentence of this forestalls the worry "did I already receive the Spirit?"; Session 12 and the Gifts Inventory develop it.

Thread Watch

> **Threads in play**
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> Vine (planted tonight). John 15 sits in the middle of the very discourse we read from. The home reading walks around it on purpose, but there is no secret to guard: if someone flips there or reads ahead, note it warmly and say that chapter gets a full night of its own in Session 8.
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> Shoot of Jesse (planted tonight). In the Win section someone may mention the Spirit descending on Jesus at his baptism. Affirm it and let it hang: why would the Son of God need the Spirit to rest on him? The answer waits for Session 9.
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> Sealed guess (written tonight). Each participant writes and seals an answer to: "What signs would you look for to recognize that someone is growing as a disciple of Jesus?" Collected, not discussed, opened in Session 8.

Session Goals

1. Establish that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, using the personal verbs of John 14-16 discovered by the group.
2. Connect Pentecost to Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 through live discovery.
3. Plant the Vine and Shoot of Jesse threads without resolving them.
4. Collect every participant's sealed guess.

Time Note

Runs 80-85 minutes at full length. If short on time, cut Build question 5 (the "grieve the Spirit" cross-check) and trim the Pentecost sign discussion to one exchange; do not cut the sealed guess.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Win · Opening Questions

1. When you hear the words "Holy Spirit," what picture comes to mind, honestly? Where do you think that picture came from?

2. Tell us about a person who genuinely changed for the better over time. What did you notice first?

Build · Into the Text

Read John 14:15-17 and 25-26 aloud, then 16:7-15. Ask the group to hunt as they listen: what does the Spirit actually do in these verses?

1. List every action Jesus attributes to the Counselor in these passages. What kind of being does things like this?

> **ANSWER** · share after the discussion
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> He teaches, brings to remembrance, dwells with and in the disciples, convinces the world, guides into all truth, speaks what he hears, declares what is to come, and glorifies Jesus. These are the acts of a person, not a current of energy. A force does not teach; a power does not speak.

2. Jesus calls him "another Counselor" (14:16). Another besides whom? What does that one word tell us about who is coming?

> **ANSWER** · share after the discussion
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> Another besides Jesus himself, who has been the disciples' advocate and teacher until now: the Spirit will continue for the whole Church, everywhere and always, the personal advocacy Jesus gave the Twelve in one place and time. Jesus even says it is to their advantage that he goes so the Counselor may come (16:7), a staggering thing to say of anyone less than divine; the Church's full confession of his divinity rests on the whole witness of Scripture and the baptismal faith St. Basil defends below.

> **Live Discovery**
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> Send the group to find two Old Testament promises without giving references aloud beyond the books: one in Ezekiel 36 (a new heart and God's own Spirit placed within) and one in Joel 2 (the Spirit poured out on all flesh). Have both read aloud when found.

3. Now read Acts 2:1-13. Peter will shortly quote one of the two passages you just found. Which one, and why does that quotation change how we read Pentecost?

> **ANSWER** · share after the discussion

Joel 2:28, quoted in Acts 2:17. Pentecost is not a surprise; it is a promise being kept. And Ezekiel supplies the other half: the Spirit is not poured out to sit on the surface of a crowd but to be put within each person, replacing the heart of stone. Both prophets together give us the shape of this entire study.

4. Wind, fire, many languages understood at once. Where has Israel seen God arrive in wind and fire before, and what is Luke telling us by the echo?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Sinai, where the Lord descended in fire and the mountain shook (Exodus 19:18). At Sinai God formed Israel into a covenant people; at Pentecost the Spirit forms the Church, the new covenant people. And the Fathers saw in the many languages the healing of Babel: what pride scattered, the Spirit gathers.

5. Ephesians 4:30 warns, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." What does the possibility of grieving him settle about who he is?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Only a person can be grieved. You cannot sadden gravity or offend electricity. Scripture's own language closes the door on the "impersonal force" picture, which is why the Creed confesses him as Lord and giver of life, adored and glorified with the Father and the Son.

Dig Deeper · Person, not projection

The Church confesses one God in three Persons, each fully God, none interchangeable (CCC 253-255). The Spirit is not the Father's energy or the Son's afterglow. Where the Church has not defined how the three Persons' inner life exceeds our categories, we speak with reverence and restraint; but that the Spirit is a divine Person is defined, confessed, and prayed every Sunday.

My Guess · write and seal tonight

Hand each participant a slip: "What signs would you look for to recognize that someone is growing as a disciple of Jesus?" Two or three sentences, no discussion, sealed and collected. Tell the group plainly how this works: I will keep these sealed and unread. In Session 8 you will get your own envelope back, still sealed, and compare your guess with the Scriptures we read together. No one's answer will be read without permission; sharing is invited, never required.

Send · Closing Questions

1. If the Spirit who filled the apostles at Pentecost was given to you at your baptism, what difference should that make to how you walk into tomorrow morning?

2. How could knowing that the Holy Spirit is a Person change the way someone prays?

Live It This Week

- Pray the Come, Holy Spirit prayer once each morning this week, slowly, as address to a Person.
- Read John 14 and John 16 in one sitting before next session and underline every verb whose subject is the Counselor.
- Once this week, before a difficult conversation, silently ask the Holy Spirit to speak first.

Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, you were promised by the Son and poured out at Pentecost. Dwell in us as you dwelt in the first disciples. Teach us, remind us, and glorify Jesus in us, until our lives bear fruit that will abide. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

> **Acts 1:8**
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> But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses...

Leader Reference Card

Every passage read or discussed in this session, in order of appearance, with key leader background.

- John 14:15-17, 25-26
- John 16:7-15
- Acts 2:1-13, 17
- Ezekiel 36:26-27
- Joel 2:28
- Exodus 19:18
- Ephesians 4:30
- Acts 1:8 (memory verse)
- Genesis 1:2 (leader background)
- John 15:16 (closing prayer allusion)