

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

## GIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT A BLANK CHECK

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In the Name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I beg your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

This Sunday, we celebrate a great Solemnity of Pentecost, the great Solemnity of the Holy Spirit. He is sent by the Father and the Son so that we are not left orphans. Once Jesus left, He wanted to do something that no one else can do, which is to remain with us. And He does that through the presence of the Holy Spirit, who will speak in the name of Christ, and who will lead us to all the truth, remind us of everything that Jesus did and thought.

We know what happened on that great day. Everybody was amazed. They were not expecting such a spectacle. When the Apostles, recall they were gathered in the upper room, there with Mary, and the other women, and all of a sudden, there came a sound from Heaven, says St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, "...as of a violent wind blowing." And it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak.

Everyone was speaking in their own native tongue, and yet everyone understood each other. This certainly stands in contrast with what happened, what had happened at the Tower of Babel, when everyone was united in the one cause of making a tower to outdo God. To kind of reach God. They wanted basically to become like God, as Adam and Eve were tempted to become or to desire to become. And yet here in the Acts of the Apostles in that upper room, they are divinized. They are truly divinized, not in pride, but in humility. And they are all speaking a different tongue. But far from fighting with each other and far from not understanding each other, they all can communicate through the Spirit. What an amazing show of universality. Truly the Church is born, and is born Catholic, since the very beginning.

The presence of the Spirit is truly notable in the Acts of the Apostles known as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit at times. Because even if the Apostles are imprisoned, or even if they are unable to overcome their human weaknesses, we see that the Holy Spirit helps them, comes to their aid, and actually helps them to overcome all obstacles, whether they be within or without, or on the outside. The Apostles may be imprisoned, to quote St. Paul, but the Word of God is not imprisoned. The Word of God keeps going. And the Word of God keeps spreading them so that like seeds, they just are blown by the wind of the Holy Spirit, throughout the empire, and they, wherever they can, whatever situation they may be found, they can communicate this great life of God, the life that they have been witnesses of in Jesus Christ, the fact that he has resurrected. It really is an extraordinary show of, of an amazing power. We could say, an amazing power of the Holy Spirit.

Wherever the spirit is, there is newness, there is life. There is definitely a difference between what the Apostles were before, and what the Apostles are after they received the Holy Spirit. Just look at, look at the few examples we have in the Gospel, in the Passion of Our Lord, the Apostles ran away, they couldn't persevere. Or those who followed, followed at a distance as St. Luke says that St. Peter followed. He was at a comfortable distance we can add.

But after the Holy Spirit comes, somehow they, all of the Apostles persevere in the teachings of Jesus, in the breaking of the bread, they persevere. This, this word is very important. They persevere to the end. They're not afraid anymore. And they follow Jesus closely, not at a distance, but closely. Whereas before there was this discord, and talk about who was the greatest. Now, they are one heart and one soul. They are united, which is a mir... that is a miracle. I mean, especially when everybody was talking about who was the greatest and who was better than the other. And I mean, these people were very, you know, normal, normal, and sons like you and me, we just think about ourselves sometimes. And we're into that comparison stuff, you know, they had envy just like we do.

But imagine what could happen when the Holy Spirit comes to us, you know, we will be united with people that we didn't even think we could be united with. And that is a testament to the Catholicity of the Church. I don't know if you've heard that joke. Somebody told me this joke. How many Apostles fit in a Honda? Give up? It's all of them. All of them fit in a Honda. Because it says in the Acts of the Apostles, they were, all the Apostles were in one accord. Okay, chuckle chuckle sorry. But the fact is that they are united. They are in one accord, not the car, but in unity. And that is the amazing thing. That's even more difficult than getting them in one Accord. The car I mean. Because, you know, it's like passing through the narrow gate, or the eye of a needle, God can do that, but we cannot do that. Because we have Original Sin, and we are so gullible at times, but God is with us as well. The Holy Spirit is with us.

You know, think of, of how the Apostles, before the Holy Spirit came, ran away from the Cross. And they didn't want... all they wanted was their comfort, their pleasure. And, and now, after the Holy Spirit comes, it says in the Acts of the Apostles, after they're in prison, they were scourged, and they rejoiced for having been able to suffer something for the name, the name of Jesus. That's incredible. I mean, unheard of that the Apostles would actually seek to give their flesh to the, to the Scourge, you know, because they were so, so chicken before.

But now that the Holy Spirit comes, they are no longer afraid. They have the gift of courage to proclaim the truth, there's no more denials. Now there's confession, confession of faith, you know. And they seek the truth with all their might. Also in the Acts of the Apostles, we read how when there was a little bit of a dispute as to whether the Christians, the early Christians, should follow the Law of... of Moses. They had a council known as the Council of Jerusalem in the year 50. And when they decide that the Law of Moses did not need to be fulfilled in all its nitty-gritty kind of precepts, they say they read a letter and in that letter, they say, "...the Holy Spirit and we have decided."

Just that little insertion of the Holy Spirit. They were conscious of the fact that the Holy Spirit was with them when they were together in that council, that first Ecumenical Council of Jerusalem. And that He was inspiring in them, He was guiding them to all the truth, you know, in that decision to, you know, not have people be circumcised or follow other precepts of the law and eat certain food, types of food and not others and so on. You know, this is the Holy Spirit at work, guiding us, guiding the Church to all the truth that Christ has made known to us.

What an amazing show of, of power we could say but not power in the worldly sense. This is power in the Heavenly sense. It's the power of humility, the power of, of the docility of the Apostles that let go and let God. Let God the Holy Spirit act in and through them in spite of their own weaknesses, which they still carry with them. No one has taken that away. But now, those weaknesses are no longer obstacles to the spreading of the message that Christ has wanted them to spread, which is the new... the Good News, the the evangelization, the first evangelization. And we continue with that evangelization, as the Holy Father keeps reminding us that we are apostles as well.

St. Josemaria called the Holy Spirit, the great unknown. Unfortunately, it's true, that very few people know who the Holy Spirit is in their life. And they, they may not deal with Him as they should. And, and we as well, perhaps find it at times difficult to get to know Him because the Holy Spirit is very humble, He kind of disappears. That's also another reason why He's the great unknown because He makes Himself disappear. You know, He doesn't take, he doesn't want any glory. He wants to give all the glory, if we can say this to the Father, you know. But of course, He's God, He definitely deserves all the glory.

But the person of the Holy Spirit is a very mysterious person for us because, also because we don't relate to the Holy Spirit as easily, perhaps, as we do with the Father, we all have a father, we can think of a father when we, when we pray to God the Father. We can, we know exactly what it means to be a son, because we're all children, you know. And we definitely have our own children, who can, you know, relate to us. And whether, you know, in the flesh, physical children or spiritual children, I mean, that's just a phenomenon in humanity, that we can identify fatherhood and sonship very easily.

But what about the Holy Spirit? Who is the Holy Spirit? We don't have experience of that in our, you know, in the way that we have experience of a father or a mother or a son or daughter. But the fact is that the Holy Spirit is that love between the father and the son that joins them together, you know. I like the comparison of the analogy of thinking of the Holy Spirit like the telephone line. He is a telephone line, you know, when you have a telephone line, that is really good, you don't even notice it, because the person seems to be right there, You know. Now you have Skype, you have all sorts of other video conferencing that make the person so available, so so close to the person who wants to be with that person.

So, the Holy Spirit is like the telephone line. And if it's a really good telephone line, you don't notice it at all, it kind of disappears. If it's a bad telephone line, that's when you start actually noticing the crackling. You start noticing the static. You start noticing that it gets cut off every now and then. Well, the Holy Spirit is a really good telephone line. And when He is uniting us to the Father in the Son, then we are, we are totally connected. And we therefore, have to know indirectly that the Holy Spirit is with us, He's praying within us, He's praying within us, you know, He's connecting us, as other Christs, Christ Himself to the Father.

Wherever the Father is, and the Son is, that's where the Holy Spirit is, uniting both, you know. St. Augustine put it, The Holy Spirit is, is the love between the lover and the beloved. You know, the one who loves is the Father, the Beloved is the Son, and He is the love between them. What a great analogy that is.

And so, for us, we want to get to know the Holy Spirit. And the million-dollar question is, “How do we do that if He disappears, if He is so subtle, sometimes? Well, look at what St. Paul writes to the Romans, he is impressed at the depth of the riches of wisdom in God, and he writes that, and he kind of makes an exclamation, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God, and how incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways. For, who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that recompense should be made Him? For, from Him and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever, Amen.”

You know, here in this exclamation of the depth of, of Wisdom of God, we immediately think of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit, with His gifts, especially of Wisdom, He helps us to understand the ways of God, and not, and depart from the ways of the world. Because the ways of the world, according to St. Paul, are flesh as we will read in the second reading of the Mass of Pentecost. The ways of the world, are flesh, and the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and vice versa, the spirit fights against the flesh, and they are opposed to each other. And they don't see eye to eye, you know. They are always in different planes. And that's why, and you know, we shouldn't be surprised that we find it difficult to understand the ways of God. Because the Apostles found it difficult to understand the ways of God through suffering, and, or Redemption through suffering and going through the Cross and, and Peter getting corrected by Our Lord, “Get behind Me, Satan,” because he didn't understand the ways of, of the Spirit. He was still with a fleshy outlook, we could say, you know, with a worldly outlook.

Well, when the Spirit comes, and we ask Him to come in a new Pentecost to each one of us, today, Pentecost, we will have this sensitivity to understand the things of God. And not only the things of God, as if that were little, it is a lot, we will understand the things of the world, from God's point of view, as well. We will understand the meaning of the material world of the created world, and how it can lead us to God. That is actually the great way that we can use the world for our own benefit. By understanding it from the point of view of God and seeing how we can go back to Him, in and through the material creation that we have in front of us.

So, think about what the Holy Spirit will do and has done. I mean, if you, if you're docile to the Holy Spirit, and that's the attitude I think we have to have with the Holy Spirit, docility. If we are docile to the Holy Spirit, we will understand the things of God, we will understand the created world, and everything will be for our own good, our own benefit. Like St. Paul says to the Romans, everything works unto the good. For those who love God, everything, everything just finds its way for our, you know, in our benefit for our own holiness.

Therefore, nothing can harm us, nothing can do us. Nothing can hurt us anymore because we are with the Spirit and the Spirit guides us. You know, we are like those Apostles, like Philip who just is guided by the Spirit to approach the Ethiopian, you know whose reading from the book of Isaiah. We are like, like Paul who is driven to, to spread the message of Christ throughout all of Asia Minor. We are like, you know, in the Gospel itself, we are like, like Simeon, you know, who's inspired to be at the Temple at the right time at the right place, and prophesy the Cross, to Our Lady and St. Joseph. You know, this is, if we have that docility to just let the promptings of the Spirit move us, then, how much good will we do? How much of the Gospel will we spread wherever we are?

Docility to the Holy Spirit. I mean, this is what Our Lord was trying to tell Nicodemus, in that long dialogue that he had, in John Chapter Three, He was telling him, You have to be born again, of water and the Spirit. "Amen. Amen. I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit, do not wonder that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it will, and you hear it's sound, but do not know where it comes from, or where it goes. So, everyone who was born in the Spirit."

You see, Our Lord is challenging Nicodemus, and He's challenging us to be docile to the Spirit. And, to be docile means to give the Holy Spirit a blank check. That's what it means. It means to take a risk, it means that we won't know where He comes from and we don't know where we're going. But we know we're in sure hands. And that's what it means to commit ourselves to the Christian life. I mean, just think, if Zacchaeus thought twice about climbing the sycamore tree, he would not have seen Jesus. He would have missed Him. You know, I don't know if I'm supposed to climb this tree or not. But he was inspired by the Spirit to climb that tree.

If the widow said, I don't know, I have two mites, I don't know, maybe I should keep them from my lunch or something. They aren't even going to be enough for my lunch. If she thought too hard, Jesus would have left and nobody would have gotten this teaching of the widow's mite. You know, but she didn't care. She gave it because she was inspired by the Spirit to do so. And same thing with that other woman that touched Our Lord from the back. If she had thought twice, Jesus would have been pushed all around away from her and she would never have been cured. And we would never have gotten that revelation of the fact that we can touch Jesus, not in His garden, but in His heart, if we really believe and if we're really docile, to the Spirit.

I mean, docility to the Spirit means dare, dare to go out of your comfort zone. And I say this to myself as well. We have to dare to go out, you know, and preach the Good News. Go out from where? From our comfort zone, that's from where. That's where we have to simply forget about our, I don't know, whatever we are attached to our possessions, our career, our status quo, you know. Where are you going? And are you going to let the Spirit take you wherever He goes. And yes, it means signing a blank check. You don't know when He's going to cash it. You don't know how much He's gonna withdraw. But He will never abandon you. I mean, you have to, why are you afraid, why am I afraid to let the Spirit be more in my life?

It really is amazing. I mean, out of all the people that we are afraid of letting into our lives, we are most afraid of God. Why, why is that? Lord the Holy Spirit take away that fear. Because it doesn't make any sense, we should fear everybody else and everything else except God and the one we end up fearing most is God at times. Why? We have to cease to be afraid, to abandon ourselves, to commit ourselves entirely to God.

You know, I find it funny how Our Lord abandons Himself in our hands, He gives us Himself entirely with the Eucharist. He doesn't hold anything back. He gives Himself entirely, abandons Himself like that. Wouldn't it be just as good or, you know, the least we could do to someone who abandons Himself in our hands so readily, and so much and so completely, to abandon ourselves in His hands? What more can we possibly ask for? What greater proof that we are going to be taken care of, through and through? Really, we have to pray to get rid of this fear, just like the Apostles needed to get rid of the fear of the Cross?

Well, let's truly think, what is my relationship with the Spirit, with the Holy Spirit? Am I docile? Do I listen? Do I have my antenna up to listen to the fine suggestions? The whispers, of the Holy Spirit, when I need to serve others, when you know, He inspires a little mortification at a meal within me, you know, so that I give up something so that others can have a better share, you know, in ordinary things, nothing extraordinary, but constant things, constant things. And then, if the Holy Spirit wants even bigger things, you know, where are you going in your, you know, for your entire life, are you going to commit yourself to God, in this path, or another? That's the Holy Spirit inspiring a vocation, whether it's to marriage or the priesthood, or the religious life or celibacy in the world. St. Josemaria was inspired to promote, you know, celibacy in the world, without thereby ceasing to be a layman or woman.

Look at what St. Cyril of Jerusalem says about the action of the Holy Spirit, "the action of the Holy Spirit is one, but it has many effects. And in each person, the Holy Spirit does something different. You know, for the benefit of the Church, not for me, and also for our own benefit, but not strictly only for our benefit, but for everyone's benefit. He says, even in a single person, at a mere sign from God the Father, and in the name of Christ, the Holy Spirit produces the various virtues.

He uses the tongue to communicate wisdom, He illuminates the mind of another with the gift of prophecy. To this one, He confers the power of expelling demons, and to that one, the ability to interpret Scripture. In one, He strengthens temperance, another He teaches all that refers to the works of charity, and to someone else fasting and the ascetical life. He moves this person to scorn material goods, while He prepares that person for martyrdom, and so on. The Holy Spirit has many effects, but He is one. He is one. And if we are docile to him, we will live the life of God. And we will be able to share that life with many souls.

That's what St. Josemaria did. I mean, when St. Josemaria was little he wanted to be an architect. You know, maybe if he had been an architect, we would have had all of these great architectural, you know, buildings and extraordinary structures. But, where would I be? Where would you be? I mean we wouldn't be listening to this if it hadn't been for him, for his generous response. He did not want to become a diocesan priest. That was not his inkling or his natural tendency, but he wanted it because he understood deep within his soul that's what God wanted of him. You see that docility to even overcome his likes and dislikes. Because he sees the greater mission that Our Lord has in store for him.

He was available. He wrote the blank check for the Holy Spirit. He put up his sail as it were. So that the wind of the Holy Spirit can take him wherever he wanted. He. He didn't know what God wanted of him. But, eventually, he started to pray, "Lord, that I may see." And through the Holy Spirit, he founded Opus Dei as this path to holiness in ordinary work. And then he didn't want, I don't know if you know this, but he didn't want women to be in Opus Dei, because he didn't think that he could work with women. And he just didn't think about it. And, he didn't know how to do it.

And then, on February 14, 1930, at Mass, he saw, he says, the whole women's branch of Opus Dei, of course women fit into Opus Dei. But, the Holy Spirit somehow inspired in him the idea that it was not his doing, but the Spirits doing. Because if it were up to him, you know, with his way of thinking of the time and his culture and his possibilities, he would have never started to work with women, but the Holy Spirit wanted something else. And he was docile enough to the Spirit that he founded, or he started the work with women. He had already founded Opus Dei, on October 2, 1928, but he started the work with women in 1930.

And then, to expand, you know, to other countries. He was very docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, when he didn't have anybody to go anywhere. But the few people he had, he asked to go to many countries, and that's why St. Josemaria, has opened up this path, or the Holy Spirit has opened up the path through St. Josemaria, because of this great docility, you know, this path to holiness, in the ordinary, in so many countries right now, because of the docility of people who wrote the blank check, and who didn't care about, you know, their own career or their own likes and dislikes. They saw that God was asking them to do this, and they did it. That's wild. It really is wild, it's totally spiritual. And as you could see, the Holy Spirit is, is young, energetic, wild. You know, He makes all things new. As St. John says in the Apocalypse, it really is the Spirit that renews the face of the Earth, as we say in that beautiful hymn that we can pray on Pentecost.

Well, we have so many things to pray about now. The, it is clear that if we let God in our lives, and we let God the Holy Spirit, take us wherever He will, in all humility, He will do the rest. And He will do so much good for the Church.

Let us end our meditation with this sequence that we will pray this Sunday, a beautiful sequence of the Holy Spirit, what He does, and what He can do in us if we let Him.

“Holy Spirit, Lord of light,  
From Thy clear celestial height,  
Thy pure beaming radiance give.

Come, Thou Father of the poor,  
Come with treasures which endure,  
Come Thou light of all that live.

Thou, of all consolers best,  
Thou, the soul's delightful Guest,  
Dost refreshing peace bestow.

Thou, in toil art comfort sweet,  
Pleasant coolness in the heat,  
Solace in the midst of woe.

Light immortal, Light divine,  
Visit Thou these hearts of Thine,  
And our inmost being fill.

If Thou take Thy grace away,  
Nothing pure and man will stay;  
All his good is turned to ill.

Heal our wounds; our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour Thy dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away.

Bend the stubborn heart and will;  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;  
Guide the steps that go astray.

Thou, on those who evermore  
Thee confess and Thee adore,  
In Thy sevenfold gifts descend:

Give us comfort when we die,  
Give us life with Thee on high;  
Give us joys that never end.”

I thank you, my God for the good resolutions, affections and inspirations which you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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