

**BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**by Harold Cohen, S.J.**

Prior to His ascension Jesus told His apostles, "Before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." He added, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:5-8). The Apostles prayed for the coming of the Holy Spirit with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and a group of about one hundred and twenty. On Pentecost they were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" and were transformed into new creatures, bold witnesses for Christ.

Pentecost comes to each of us in the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. In Baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit and become God's children and members of the body of Christ. In Confirmation, we receive a new fullness of the Spirit and are empowered to serve the Church and bear witness to Jesus.

Often we do not allow the Spirit we have received to be as active in us as He wants to be. To use an analogy, He is like chocolate syrup poured into a glass of milk--it goes to the bottom of the glass until stirred up. But when it is stirred up, it permeates the milk and transforms it into something new. We can learn how to "stir up" the Spirit--and how to receive more of Him--from Jesus in the Gospels:

"If anyone thirst, let him come to Me, let him drink who believes in Me. As the scripture has said, 'Out of His heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now He said this about the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive" (John 7:37-39). "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13)

The Lord teaches us that first we must thirst for God; we must desire more and more of His Spirit. Then we must believe that Jesus is faithful to His promises and will indeed give us His Holy Spirit. Finally, we must ask God for the Holy Spirit. We must pray with perseverance, asking, seeking, knocking, believing that "everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:10). We can follow the example of the early Church by praying for the Spirit in union with Mary and the apostles as they did at the first Pentecost (see Acts 1:12-14).

What can we expect when we are "baptized with the Holy Spirit"? We can expect an immediate or gradual experience of deeper union with God, our loving Father and with Jesus, our Lord and Friend; a fresh appreciation of Scripture; a greater love for others and a desire for Christian fellowship; the fuller presence in our lives of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience and more (see Galatians 5:22-23); the receptions of one or more of the Charismatic gifts of the Spirit such as discernment, service, prophecy, praying in tongues, healing (see 1 Corinthians 12-14). This gift of a new fullness of the Holy Spirit is, I believe, the grace of our age. "Ask and it will be given to you!"