

TREASURES of OUR FAITH
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Greetings brothers and sisters. As we go through this 'Year of Faith', each week we will take a journey together to deepen and rediscover our faith as Catholic Christians. We will take time to look at the rich traditions of our Church, we'll look at what certain things signify and their symbolism, take time to answer some frequently asked questions and look at why we do certain things as Catholics. This week we'll look at some of the Symbols of the Holy Spirit and their meanings.

Water – The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action and involvement in Baptism. The Holy Spirit is a sacramental sign of new birth. The waters of Baptism signify that our birth in to divine life is truly given to us in the Holy Spirit.

Anointing – The symbolism of anointing with oil also signifies the receiving of the Holy Spirit. In Christian initiation, we are anointed with the Holy Spirit in Baptism and in Confirmation. Christ, (in Hebrew, 'messiah') means the one anointed by God's Spirit.

Wind/Breath - Scripture tells us, when the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were. (*Acts 2:1*)
The wind represents the Holy Spirit's share in the creation of the world (Genesis), and the breath of God represents the Holy Spirit's participation in the creation of human beings (Gen 2:7).

Fire – The symbolism of fire represents the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions. John the Baptist proclaimed Christ as the one "who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." We see the action of the Holy Spirit as it rests on the disciples on Pentecost and fills them with the Spirit.

The Seal – This symbol is closely tied to anointing. The Father has set his seal on Christ and also seals us in Him. We see this 'Seal' in the anointing with the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. The image of the seal expresses the 'character' imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments.

The Hand – Jesus often times heals the sick and blesses by the laying on of hands. In Jesus' name, the apostles do the same. It is by the imposition of hands that the Holy Spirit is given.

The Dove – When Christ comes up from the waters of His baptism, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes down upon Him and remains with Him. We experience the Holy Spirit coming down and remaining in our hearts through baptism.

These are some of the images used to express the Holy Spirit, there are of course other images and ways of describing the work and presence of the Holy Spirit, but these are some that speak personally and powerfully to me, I encourage you to think about other ways that the Holy Spirit is represented, especially in those personal ways that you see and encounter the Holy Spirit in your life.