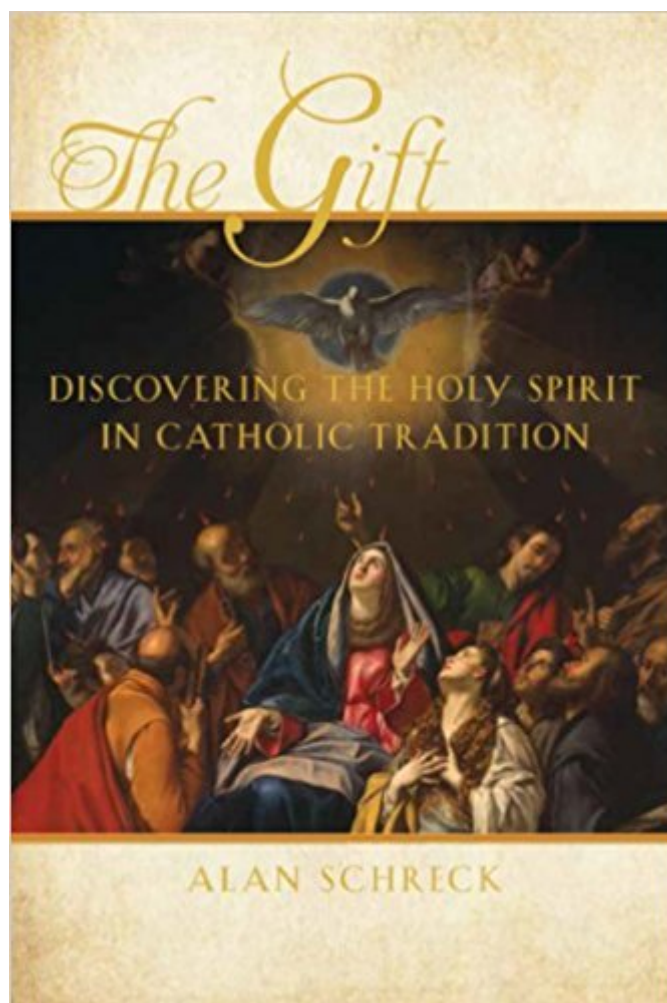


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# The Gift: Discovering The Holy Spirit In Catholic Tradition



## Synopsis

Who is the Holy Spirit? What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of the Church and of the individual Christian? Beginning with the belief in the Holy Spirit as a Person of God, and not just a "force," this book reveals the Catholic understanding of the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit God in every aspect of the Christian life. The book focuses on the unique aspects and development of Catholic devotion to the Holy Spirit from antiquity to the present, culminating in a look at Catholic theology of the Holy Spirit today and the new and exciting ways the Spirit is working among Catholics and all Christians in the 20th and 21st centuries.

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## Customer Reviews

This timely title arrives at a moment of the Holy Spirit's strong movement within our beleaguered Church. Consider what we have witnessed in only a few short months: Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's prayer-inspired decision to retire; the election of Pope Francis by cardinals of the Conclave; and now our new Holy Father's powerful example of teaching, first through his actions, then reinforced by the wisdom of his words, urging the need for our participation in deeper, wider outreach to the poor, the needy, and the Church's youth. In "The Person of the Holy Spirit," Alan Schrek traces the Spirit's presence in creation, in Spirit's appeal to the hearts of God's people, in openness to the Wisdom revealed to and through the prophets. After Jesus's revelation of the Pentecost gift of the Holy Spirit's coming to us as Advocate and Counselor, the Church's understanding of

the Holy Spirit's role in the life of the Church grew and was clarified. Schreck Examining, as if every facet of a diamond, the author focuses on one aspect, then another, of the many gifts the Spirit offers us. Starting with devotion and prayer to the Holy Spirit, we are led to consider the Spirit's guidance in truth, holiness, as Gift providing gifts, relationship with the Church, with our Blessed Mother, and in the dynamic of our Church in the graced present of the here and now. Refreshed and inspiring, The Gift is highly recommended for parish, seminary, and university libraries, and students in the upper years of high school. •Francis O'Dell, OFM, Catholic Library World

Who is the Holy Spirit? What role does the Spirit play in the life of the Church and of the individual Christian? Beginning with the belief in the Holy Spirit as a Person of God, and not just a "force," this book reveals the Catholic understanding of the presence and influence of the Spirit God in every aspect of the Christian life. The book focuses on the unique aspects and development of Catholic devotion to the Holy Spirit from antiquity to the present, culminating in a look at Catholic theology of the Holy Spirit today and the new and exciting ways the Spirit is working among Catholics and all Christians in the 20th and 21st centuries.

As the publishing arm of the ecumenical Community of Jesus, Paraclete has published a number of books from a range of theological traditions. Their Holy Spirit series boasts books from the Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal traditions. I have reviewed a number of these books here before and have found them immensely helpful. A few of these books are downright fabulous! Jack Levison's Fresh Air and Amos Yong's Who is the Holy Spirit? are standout volumes but every single volume is good. Each book manages to illuminate the Spirit in a way that honors their peculiar denominational tradition. These are lay-friendly books, but they are theologically astute. The Gift: Discovering the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Tradition lives up to the quality of other books in this series. Alan Schreck, professor of theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville is a specialist in Catholic doctrine, church history and the teachings of Vatican II; however this is not just a book about Catholic dogma. Schreck has an eye for how we can deepen our spiritual experience by praying for the Spirit to do his work in our lives. In seven chapters, Schreck synthesizes the wisdom of the Catholic understanding of the Spirit. In chapter one he describes the person of the Holy Spirit as presented in Holy Scripture and in the Tradition. He describes what the Old and New Testament say about the Spirit, what the Councils and Creeds came to declare about the

personhood of the Spirit and the Augustinian understanding which was most influential in the Western Church. Chapter two examines the history of Catholic devotion to the Spirit. Schreck describes various orthodox movements which sought to emphasize the Spirit. Chapters three through five describe the ministry of the Spirit. Chapter three focuses on truth, chapter four focuses on holiness and sanctification and chapter five expounds on gifts of the Holy Spirit. While every Christian would agree that the Spirit leads us into all truth, convicts us of sin and leads us to be transformed in the image of Christ and gifts us for ministry and mission. Schreck illuminates a Catholic understanding of the Spirit's role in each of these. The Spirit leads us into truth and empowers us to speak it boldly, but ecumenism that denies or downplays truth revealed to the church should be questioned. Holiness is the goal of the Christian life, but in the Catholic understanding, this is described by our cooperation with God in the grace he has given us through the Spirit. The Spirit gives gifts to individuals and orders of the church, but Schreck demonstrates how we are to understand this in relationship to the institutional church. In chapter six, Schreck describes the relationship between the Spirit, the church and Mary. Church was birthed at Pentecost and is constituted by the Spirit and his work. Mary is the first disciple and member of the church. In the Catholic tradition, Mary intercedes for us to the Father, but whatever grace is in her is derivative. She is the recipient of God's grace and exemplary for her fiat to the incarnation (her 'yes' to God). Like the Spirit, Mary points us to Jesus, the Divine Son of God. Mary is not to be understood as the Third person of the Trinity or someone who usurps the Spirit's role, but as the prime example of someone who cooperates with God and reveals the maternal aspects of God's character. In the final chapter Schreck discusses the Spirit in the Catholic church today. He focuses on the Catholic charismatic movement and the emphasis of Vatican II on the Spirit's work. Schreck gives a generous and a positive assessment of these while acknowledging that many Catholics will not feel called to join up with movements devoted to the Spirit's work. Nevertheless all Catholics should appreciate how the Spirit enables, enlivens and empowers the Christian life. An appendix collects several prayers and reflections on the Holy Spirit which can be incorporated into your daily prayer time. I appreciate Schreck's articulation of Catholic teaching. Throughout this book Schreck comments on the Catechism, Vatican II and Catholic theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), Yves Conger, John Paul II, and Vatican II. He gives a careful and reasoned defense of Catholic teaching on the Spirit and draws out the implications for our lives. As a non-Catholic reading this book, there are areas where I disagree with Schreck rather sharply. However I appreciated Schreck's description of Catholic teaching and practice. In addition to having a good grasp on Catholic dogma, he seems to also be an apt apologist, anticipating many of the

difficulties protestants like me face. I found Schreck generous and evenhanded in his presentation and do not hesitate to commend this book to you. Catholics will obviously benefit most directly from this book. As a non-Catholic I gained a greater appreciation for Catholic teaching and the insights of the theologians that Schreck culls together. This is a great short book on the Spirit in Catholicism. I give it four-and-a-half stars. Thank you to Paraclete Press for providing me a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

What does the Catholic Church teach on the Holy Spirit? What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit? How does the Holy Spirit work in the Catholic Church? Dr. Schreck, professor at Franciscan University of Steubenville, answers all these questions and more in one of his latest books, *The Gift: Discovering the Holy Spirit in Catholic Tradition*. The book spans seven chapters (by design, I'm sure) and is approximately 150 pages. Chapter 1 talks about the Person of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 2 discusses devotion to the Holy Spirit. Chapters 3 and 4 address the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Holiness, respectively. The next two chapters particularly stood out to me and were the ones I found the most interesting. Chapter 5 discussed the Gifts of the Spirit. In addition to discussing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, Dr. Schreck also explains how "the Holy Spirit is the Gift of God who is God." He then explains the difference between Baptism and Confirmation. In Baptism, we receive the Holy Spirit, but in Confirmation "the faithful are equipped for their apostolate." This chapter is followed by Chapter 6, which discusses the Church, the Holy Spirit, and Mary. A particularly fascinating section explains the difference between Mary and the Holy Spirit. This seems like a no-brainer of a distinction, but it clears up some common misconceptions Protestants have regarding Mary. The last chapter discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church today. Overall, this was a very well-written book. In it, Dr. Schreck includes numerous references and quotes from saints, popes, the Catechism, etc. There has been a lot of talk about the New Evangelization. However, we tend to overlook the fact that if we are going to have a New Evangelization, we must have a new Pentecost. The only way to accomplish that is to constantly pray for the Holy Spirit's intercession. That is why, as Dr. Schreck points out, that all prayers to the Holy Spirit begin with the word "Come." So in the opening words of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, "Come, Creator Spirit, Visit the minds of those who are yours; fill with heavenly grace the hearts that you have made."

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