



**The Third Article: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

By nature, we are spiritually blind, dead and cannot trust God. Without the Holy Spirit, we actively resist the call of the Gospel. We do not speak in terms like “making a decision to accept Jesus” because we cannot “make Jesus our Savior.” We were “dead in our trespasses and sins” as **Ephesians 2:1** states. Instead, the Holy Spirit’s work calls and brings us to faith through the Gospel. The Word has the power to make alive that which was dead. Verses such as **1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Romans 8:7** and **Galatians 5:17** clearly teach that human flesh are against the Spirit and that the only way to say “**Jesus is Lord**” is **through the Holy Spirit**.

Through the death and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit has called us through the Gospel and enlightened us with the gifts given by the Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper (The Means of Grace). The Word and Sacraments are the Means of Grace as described in **Isaiah 55:10-11; John 17:20; Romans 10:17** among many other passages. Good works then follow from the work of the Holy Spirit as He has sanctified us by bringing us to Jesus to receive His gifts through faith **1 Corinthians 6:11**, then sanctifies us by strengthening our faith with the new desire to overcome sin and do the good God has prepared in advance for us to do as **Psalm 51:10, Galatians 5:22-23**, and **Ephesians 2:10** teach. The good works that flow from faith, which is the gift of God by His grace **Ephesians 2:8-9**, are set in advance for us to do as **Ephesians 2:10** makes clear and are then carried out within our various vocations as God gives gifts to His people. Such good works, that are a fruit of the faith that God gives to us, are done according to the ten Commandments as we serve God by serving our neighbor. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God continually leads us to do good in His Kingdom while we look to His promises given to us in Christ.

God’s desire is for all people to come to saving faith in Christ; **1 Timothy 2:4** and **2 Peter 4:9**. Yet, sadly, some reject God’s grace and Spirit by refusing the good news of the Gospel as Jesus said in **St. Matthew 23:37** and the Scripture says in **Acts 7:51**. To be specific, “...it is by the means of the Law of God, that the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and leads us to repentance so that working through the Gospel and Sacraments, Means of Grace, the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Christ and makes us members of the Church”; **1 Corinthians 12:13** and **Ephesians 2:19-22**.

When we belong to the Church, by God’s grace, we are members of The Communion of Saints; the saints living on earth, believers and the saints gone before; in the Church Triumphant. The Church is made up of all who truly believe in Christ as Savior. (Note: the word church is also used in various ways to describe a building, a congregation or denomination.) Christ is the head of His “Church”; therefore, it is called the “Christian Church.” Only The Church is founded on the teachings of Christ, the Savior and these teaching are preserved in The Holy Scriptures and is to be proclaimed to all people, **St. Matthew 28:18-20**.

The catechism asks the question (206) “How is it possible for a just and holy God to declare sinners righteous (justification)?” **“God declares sinners righteous for Christ’s sake; that is, our sins have been imputed or charged to Christ, the Savior, and Christ’s righteousness has been imputed or credited to us.”** This is the central teaching of the Christian Church, the heart of Sacred Scripture and the teaching that distinguishes Christianity from all “world religions” that do not look to Christ as Savior. **2 Corinthians 5:21** makes it plain, that Jesus takes our sin on Himself, suffers, and dies for us so that we are made the “righteousness of God,” that is, we are justified before God through the merits of Christ alone. This is God’s grace given to us through Christ, our sins are forgiven and thus, God looks at us as justified before Him through Christ. This is offered to us in the Gospel **St. Luke 24:46-47; Romans 1:16** and **2 Corinthians 5:19**. Therefore, we do not rely on ourselves, our works, our thoughts, feelings, deeds, or anything else, but look to Christ alone. When Jesus cried out on the cross **“It is Finished;” St. John 19:30** **The work of Redemption was complete, the work of salvation accomplished through Jesus alone.** The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to faith giving us the blessings of Christ, in our Baptism and the Third Article teaches and helps us to confess the faith we have in the God who has given Christ as our Savior. Therefore, The Apostles’ Creed teaches everything God does for us in Christ that we can live the lives God has given us by His grace. So much more could be written on the The Apostles’ Creed but will have to wait for another time.

In Christ’s Service, Pastor Ahrendt