

**The Father Always Hears the Prayer for the Holy Spirit:  
A “Missing Footnote” in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***

**IV. THE SACRAMENTS OF SALVATION**

**1127** Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify.[48] They are *efficacious* because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son’s Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit.[\*] As fire transforms into itself everything it touches, so the Holy Spirit transforms into the divine life whatever is subjected to his power.

**1128** This is the meaning of the Church’s affirmation [49] that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: “by the very fact of the action’s being performed”), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that “the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.” [50] From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.

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\* [underscoring added] This seems to be a reference to Luke 11:13 which is a significant Lukan “change” in the parallel passage from Matthew 7:11. [The following passages are from the NRSV]

Matthew

<sup>7</sup> “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Luke

<sup>9</sup> “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup> Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for [bread, will give a stone; or if your child asks for] a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> 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 [from heaven] to those who ask him!”

**In other words, the Holy Spirit is the best “good thing” you can ask from the Father in the name of Jesus. This is a prayer God can never refuse to answer.**

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