

# Why Is the Dove a Symbol of the Holy Spirit?

The other day two doves were on the railing of my back deck. I had never seen them before. As I stood in my kitchen watching them I was reminded that one of the pictures the Scriptures used for the Holy Spirit is that of a dove.

When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, Scripture tells us that as soon as He went up out of the water, “heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him” (Matt. 3:16b, NIV). What’s intriguing is that Scripture doesn’t say that the Spirit of God came like a pigeon. Pigeons are often confused with doves, but they are very different in character.

I did a little research and discovered some unique qualities about doves:

- Doves don’t fight, while pigeons are known for fighting.
- Doves don’t like loud noises, while pigeons are fine with noise.
- Doves are not territorial, while pigeons are very territorial.
- Doves mate for life, while pigeons can have several mates.

What does all this have to do with us? Plenty.

## **3 Implications of the Dove Being a Symbol of the Holy Spirit**

**1. The Spirit of God calls us to peace.** When we think of the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit we are reminded that we are called to peace. The apostle Paul wrote, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace” (Col. 3:15a). Peace is an inner quiet that comes from the Holy Spirit assuring us that all will be well. With an interior of peace, we can let go of anxiety and

stress and simply rest in God's goodness.

Julian of Norwich lived during the Middle Ages and survived the Black Plague. She had a series of visions while she was very ill, and out of those visions came her profound writing, *Revelations of Divine Love*. While confined in seclusion in a cell, Julian was able to write, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." It is the Holy Spirit who provides us that depth of peace.

**The Spirit of God is not territorial.** As I think through how polarized our world is right now, the dove is a good reminder that we are not called to be pigeons, fighting and marking our territory. We are called to be peacemakers. Orchestrate peace where ever you can. The apostle Paul wrote, "As far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). Particularly with your fellow believers, don't let differences in your opinions sever the bond you have in Christ. Don't speak disparagingly of others. I have been guilty of that myself. But then I realize that is not from the Holy Spirit.

It's always astounding to me that one of the last things on Christ's mind before He went to the cross was the unity of the church. James 3:17 teaches us that when the Holy Spirit reigns in our lives, our wisdom will be peaceable and gentle. This is the evidence that the wisdom is from God and not from our own arrogance.

**The Spirit of God reminds us that we are wed to Christ—our mate for life.** When the Holy Spirit fills us, He reminds us that our allegiance is to Christ. He reminds us to stay centered on our first love, Jesus Christ. Rather than running after every new thought or theology, keep your focus on Christ. He is our "one thing." As news reports fill our homes with all sorts of issues and all sorts of opinions, keep your focus on Christ. Spend time in prayer and reading the Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your mind with thoughts of Christ throughout the day. Seek to know the presence of Christ in

your everyday life.

Friend, remember, the Holy Spirit is like a dove. He is peace-loving, nonterritorial and unites with the believer for life. Though He indwells us and will never leave nor forsake us, His power can be quenched in our lives when we forget that He comes as a dove. Don't adopt a "pigeon theology." Instead, live and walk by the Spirit.

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