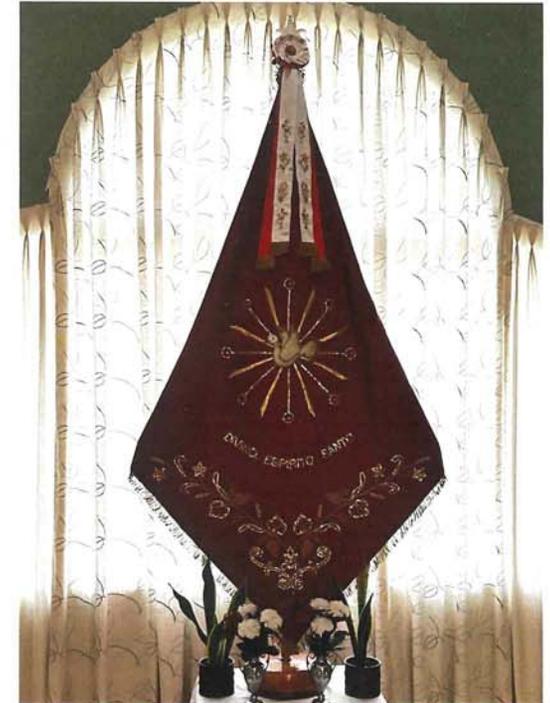

FLAG OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



A symbol of the devotion of the Portuguese and Azorean people to the Holy Spirit.



HOLY SPIRIT FESTIVAL

The Holy Spirit Festival originates from the promise given by the 13th century Queen Isabel of Portugal. Queen Isabel who later became Saint Elizabeth of Portugal was known for her devotion to the poor and as a peacemaker. It is said that her husband King Diniz, and her son quarrelled for years, and Queen Isabel feared that the quarrels would lead to battle. Queen Isabel was very distressed by this and prayed to the Holy Spirit for help to stop the arguing, if her prayer was answered, she promised to hold a ceremony every year in honour of the Holy Spirit. The ceremony put a poor man on her throne and crowned him with her own crown. Her prayer was answered, and the argument ended. This was the beginning of the Holy Spirit Festival.



In modern times, the celebration begins on the Sunday after Easter Sunday, and continues for seven weeks.

During the weeks leading up to the festival, families in the parishes have the honour of sponsoring a week.

Each sponsor has the honour of housing the symbols of the Holy Spirit, which are a large silver crown topped with a dove, a sceptre as well as the Holy Spirit Flag. The sponsor house will pray the rosary daily, and is responsible for hosting a meal at the end of their week as sponsor to which all in their parish are welcome. During a special mass held on Sunday evening the Holy Spirit symbols are passed to the next sponsor. This cycle continues until the seventh Sunday.



Each parish appoints an Emperor, customarily a man who has asked for help from the Holy Spirit and promises to host a festival in return for having his prayer answered. The Emperor is a main figure of the festivities, and has important duties such as finding farmers to raise the cattle which will be donated to families in need in small parcels of beef, homemade bread, butter and wine, which are delivered by a small procession following a decorated oxen cart. The festival's main event takes place on the seventh Sunday, when all participants meet together in the city to pay homage to the symbols of the Holy Spirit, followed by the "soup of the Holy Spirit" which is soup made with beef and wheat. It is served to thousands of people each year and is free to all.

