



Strength to Serve: The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

(By Deacon Rey)

Last June a few weeks before Pentecost Sunday, I received a novena in honor of the Holy Spirit.

While many of us are familiar with the Holy Spirit in Scripture, some might not know that the Holy Spirit grants us supernatural dispositions that make us more alert to discern and more ready to do the will of God.

This divine power is collectively known as the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Soon after my novena, I came across a prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit by St. Pope John Paul II. He prayed it every day for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, offering a Hail Mary and an Our Father for each of the seven gifts.

Holy Spirit, I ask You
for the gift of *Wisdom*
to better know You
and Your divine perfections,
for the gift of *Understanding*
to clearly discern the spirit
of the mysteries of the holy faith,
for the gift of *Counsel*
that I may live according
to the principles of this faith,
for the gift of *Knowledge*
that I may look for counsel in You
and that I may always find it in You,
for the gift of *Fortitude*

that no fear or earthly preoccupations
would ever separate me from You,
for the gift of *Piety*
that I may always serve Your Majesty
with a filial love,
for the gift of the *Fear of the Lord*
that I may dread sin,
which offends You, O my God.

These seven special gifts are rooted in a prophecy from Isaiah (Isa 11:2-3) about the promised Messiah.

Here are some descriptions to help you understand the meaning of these gifts:

Wisdom

With the gift of wisdom, we see God at work in our life and in the world. For the wise person, the wonders of nature, historical events, and the ups and downs of our life take on a deeper meaning and purpose. It is the gift of Wisdom that strengthens our faith, fortifies hope, perfects charity, and promotes the practice of virtue in the highest degree. Wisdom is the fullest expression of the gift of knowledge and understanding.

Understanding

With the gift of understanding, we comprehend how we need to live as a follower of Jesus Christ. A person with understanding is not confused by all the conflicting messages in our culture about the right way to live. The gift of understanding enables us to penetrate the inner meaning of revealed truths and through them to be restored to newness of life.

**Counsel or
Right Judgment**

With the gift of Counsel (or Right judgment), we know the difference between right and wrong, and we choose to do what is right. A person with right judgment avoids sin and lives out the values taught by Jesus. The gift of Counsel endows the soul with supernatural prudence, enabling it to judge promptly and rightly what must be done, specially in difficult circumstances.

Fortitude or Courage	<p>With the gift of fortitude (or courage), we overcome our fear and are willing to take risks as a follower of Jesus. A person with fortitude is willing to stand up for what is right in the sight of God, even if it means accepting rejection, verbal abuse, or even physical harm and death. By the gift of Fortitude, the soul is strengthened against natural fear and supported to the end in the performance of duty.</p>
Knowledge	<p>With the gift of knowledge, we understand the meaning of God's Revelation, especially as expressed in the life and words of Jesus Christ. A Person with knowledge is always learning more about the Scriptures and Tradition. The gift of knowledge enables us to see the loving care of God, even in adversity, and directs us to glorify Him in every circumstance of life.</p>
Piety or Reverence	<p>With the gift of piety (or Reverence), we have a deep sense of respect for God and the Church. A person with piety recognizes our total reliance on God and comes before God with humility, trust, and love. The gift of Piety inspires us to love and practice our religion, not as a burdensome duty, but as a delightful service.</p>
Fear of the Lord or Wonder and awe	<p>With the gift of Fear of the Lord (or Wonder and Awe), we are aware of the glory and majesty of God. A person with wonder and awe knows that God is the perfection of all we desire: perfect knowledge, perfect goodness, perfect power, and perfect love. The gift of Fear of the Lord fills us with a sovereign respect for God and makes us dread nothing so much as to offend Him by sin.</p>

With His sevenfold gifts, the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, strengthens the will, and inflames the heart with love of God. When we freely open our heart and mind to the creative power of the Spirit, we not only deepen the Spirit's activity in our won life but also help increase the Spirit's power within the Church and the world.