

Part 4: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

I. Introduction

A. "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11.1-3).

1. This passage has been traditionally interpreted as referring to the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit which both characterize the Messiah (Jesus) and which are given to us with the Holy Spirit at baptism and strengthened at confirmation (cf. Cat. #1831).

2. These gifts are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, piety, fortitude, and fear of the Lord.

B. These seven gifts are given for personal holiness, in contrast to the charismatic gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12.4-11, Rom. 12.6-8, and Eph. 4.11-12, which are service gifts given to build up the body of Christ.

C. These seven gifts are given to us as spiritual equipment so that we might receive and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit in all that is necessary for our salvation.

1. The Catechism calls these gifts "permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit" (#1830).

2. These gifts "complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them" (Cat. #1831).

D. How do the gifts of the Holy Spirit "complete" the virtues? How are they like the virtues, and how different?

1. Recall the first talk on holiness, which stressed that both God and the human being have parts to play in holiness.

2. How God plays that part with us differs from the virtues to the gifts.

3. We should see this section of the course on virtues as progressing from more of a focus on the human work of growing in holiness to more on God's work in the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

a. Remember that the moral virtues require deliberation and repeated choice, and can be attained even by unregenerated human beings.

b. Yet these moral virtues can be elevated by grace, which, of course, involves God's action.

c. The theological virtues themselves must be infused by God and have Him as their goal.

d. The gifts of the Holy Spirit depend upon God's initiative.

e. Notice the shift in focus, from one focused on our initiative to that of God's.

4. The essential difference between how God works with us in the virtues and how he works with us in the gifts is one of mode of operation.

a. In regard to the virtues, God adapts his mode of grace to the human way of operating: God may give grace in terms of understanding and strength in growing in virtue, but we are left to take the initiative ourselves based upon our reasoning. The process of growing in virtue, moreover, is slow, laborious, hard, and uncertain.

b. In regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, God takes the initiative with us in giving us illumination and inspiration that call for an immediate response, without our reflection--but with our consent. The progress is rapid, easy, and certain.

c. An example regarding faith and the gift of understanding.

a. Faith itself is a gift which reveals the truth to us about God.

b. Faith can be developed by studying the truths of the faith, which involves discursive reasoning. This can be a lot of work.

c. In contrast, the gift of understanding allows us to penetrate a truth of the faith immediately, intuitively, without a lot of reflection: for example, when reading scripture, one may receive an insight into it that comes "unbidden," such as understanding

intuitively how the manna in the desert foreshadows the Eucharist.

d. Another example: the gift of counsel vs. prudence.

a. The virtue of prudence often involves a lot of work in memory, deliberation, study, and thought to figure out a moral course of action.

ii. The gift of counsel, on the other hand, makes it very clear what is the right course of action immediately, without a lot of deliberation. e.g. Solomon and the baby: cut it in two.

5. The work of the virtues revolves around reason (prudence is the "organizing" moral virtue) and is designed to get the appetites to follow reason, i.e. what is true and good in this particular situation.

6. Growing in virtue prepare the human being so that he can more readily follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Thus, grace builds on nature.

7. The gifts of the Holy Spirit take over where the virtues leave off: i.e. where a human being in his weakness needs extra help from God.

8. Like the virtues, these gifts of the Holy Spirit are habits placed within the human being to enable us to receive the actions of God.

9. The work of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to perfect a human being so that he can follow the Holy Spirit, just as the virtues perfect the appetites to follow reason.

E. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are dispositions placed within us at baptism so that we can follow the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with each of our human faculties. Thus certain gifts correspond to certain human faculties.

1. The gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge and counsel all correspond to reason.

2. The gift of piety corresponds to our will.

3. The gifts of fortitude and fear of the Lord correspond to our sensitive appetites.

F. These gifts all come with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the infused virtue of charity.

1. St. Augustine associated these gifts with the beatitudes to indicate that they were necessary to live the life of the beatitudes, and that the Holy Spirit was necessary to live the Christian life.

2. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that these gifts were necessary for salvation (Summa Theologica Part I-II, Ques. 68).

3. Because these gifts are rooted in, united in, and coordinated by the virtue of charity, the essential ingredient to growing in the use of these gifts is charity, the unselfish love of God and of neighbor.

II. What are the specific gifts?

A. Fear of the Lord

1. Fear of the Lord both establishes the proper relationship between us as creatures and God the creator, and it helps us to moderate the disordered impulses of concupiscence (it keeps us from sinning through a lack of temperance) (Martinez, The Sanctifier 129).

2. Fear of the Lord corresponds to humility, which makes us know our true value before God.

3. Rooted in the love of God, fear of the Lord infuses in us "an instinctive, profound, efficacious horror of being separated from God" by displeasing Him through sinning (ibid. 130).

4. The fear of the Lord can develop and is reflected in degrees:

- a. The first, the fear of the Lord produces horror for sin, and give strength to overcome temptations (ibid. 133).

- b. In the second degree, it inspires such a profound reverence for God that everything associated with God is revered.

- c. In the third degree, it produces a detachment from the things of the earth: thus, it is associated with the poverty of spirit of the first beatitude.

B. Fortitude

1. The spiritual gift of fortitude corresponds to the virtue of fortitude, and completes it.

2. Recall that the virtue of fortitude enables us to overcome difficulties and obstacles in order to pursue what is good.

a. Particularly, fortitude enables us to overcome all types of fear and recklessness, and even to embrace suffering in order to accomplish good.

b. Other virtues associated with fortitude include patience, faithfulness, and perseverance.

3. Yet the most arduous struggle we have is that of growing in holiness, and obtaining salvation: for the way is narrow and hard that leads to life (Mt. 7.14).

4. The virtue of fortitude is limited by our human strength.

5. The gift of fortitude gives us God's strength to overcome obstacles in leading the Christian life.

a. As St. Paul says, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4.13).

b. The gift of fortitude, moreover, gives us confidence in God (Martinez 138). In this it is related to the virtue of hope.

6. There are basically two forms of the gift of fortitude:

a. The ability to take on arduous tasks and face enormous obstacles in order to pioneer an apostolic work or new venture in the spiritual life for the glory of God: e.g. St. Teresa's superhuman strength in the reform of the Carmelite Order even while suffering great difficulty in her contacts with people and tremendous desolation of soul (cf. Hardon, The Catholic Catechism 204).

b. The ability to persevere in the practice of virtue despite unexpected trials such as sickness, persecution, and failure (Hardon 204).

7. At its height, the gift of fortitude enables saints to take joy in suffering for Christ: e.g. St. Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, on his way to martyrdom, writes: "If the wild beasts do not throw themselves upon me, as has

happened with some martyrs, I shall incite them to do so...for I am the wheat of Christ and I must be crushed by the teeth of wild beasts so that I may be converted into immaculate bread" (Martinez 138-9).

C. Piety

1. The context for understanding the gift of piety is the virtue of justice, and the related virtues discussed: religion, piety, kindness, gratitude, charity.

a. Recall that the virtue of justice governs our relationships to our fellow human beings, and to God: to give each his due.

b. But we talked about the limits of justice as a virtue: how it was impossible to repay God or our parents for what they have given us, and how a society run on the principles of strict justice may not be all that human.

2. The gift of piety gives us a lively appreciation for (intuitive, experiential knowledge of) the Fatherhood of God (in contrast to his being simply our Creator) and for our shared brotherhood with other human beings (Martinez 145).

a. Our desire, then, is to honor our Father (live for his glory) and honor our brothers and sisters as having the same Father (give them all that their dignity requires).

b. There is no limit to the honor we will give our Father: there is no limit to the gift of piety. Thus, piety makes us generous.

c. Piety differs from the virtue of charity in that piety focuses on giving honor to God, while charity makes us love him for himself. St. Ignatius's motto, "For the greater glory of God," epitomizes the gift of piety (Martinez 145).

d. St. Therese of Lisieux's "little way" is marked by the gift of piety, as she sought to put her entire life in God's hands (Martinez 147).

e. St. Francis of Assisi's deep understanding that all men are brothers is a mark of the gift of piety (Martinez 146).

D. The intellectual gifts in general.

1. The remaining four gifts of the Spirit--counsel, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom--all perfect our reason and lead to supernatural knowledge.
2. These gifts all are founded on the virtue of faith, and complete our faith (Martinez 151).
3. The knowledge produced by the gifts of the Spirit is intuitive, involving direct apprehensions of truths rather than analysis or reasoning. One under the influence of these gifts simply "sees" the truth.
4. The knowledge proceeding from these gifts is rooted in love, and in experience. It's experiential knowledge, not abstract knowledge.

E. Counsel

1. The gift of counsel completes and perfects the virtue of prudence.
2. The virtue of prudence is rooted in the intellect, and involves making judgments after deliberation about what is right to do in a particular situation at a particular time.
 - a. Prudence applies general principles to particular circumstances.
 - b. But prudence is a human virtue, and is uncertain.
3. The gift of counsel involves the intrusion of the Holy Spirit to make clear what should be done in a particular case without a lot of deliberation and with confidence.
 - a. "...yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it'" (Is. 30.20-21).
 - b. Mother Theresa seems particularly to manifest the gift of counsel in the operations of the Daughters of Charity, particularly as she goes about securing property and governing the way of life of the order.
4. The gift of counsel primarily pertains to prudent counsel in one's own life, but secondarily in giving counsel to others (Hardon 202).
5. St. Augustine associated the gift of counsel with the beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful," both because mercy

is necessary in giving counsel, and because it is a mercy to give supernatural counsel.

F. Knowledge

1. Knowledge on the strictly human plane involves an understanding of creatures (i.e. created reality): what things are, their causes, purposes, characteristics, and relationships. Such knowledge is discursive, involving perception and the application of reason in a laborious process. The classification systems of Aristotle reflects natural knowledge at work.

2. The spiritual gift of knowledge reveals creatures in their relationship to God--both their nothingness in themselves, and their reflection of God's attributes--in an instant.

a. The gift of knowledge is intuitive.

b. The nature poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins reflects the gift of knowledge at work:

i. In "Pied Beauty," for example, the particularity (i.e. "thisness," "inscape") of creatures reflects God's beauty as it reveals that He is the source of these creatures:

[Glory be to God for dappled things-
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout
 that swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow,
 and plough;
 And all trades, their gear and tackle and
 trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows
 how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle,
 dim;
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
 Praise him.]

ii. In "Hurrahing in Harvest," the human heart is shown discerning the person of Christ in his creation:

.....
 I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,

Down all that glory in the heavens to glean
 our Savior;
 And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet
 gave you a
 Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder
 replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-
 wielding shoulder
 [Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-
 violet-sweet! -
 These things, these things were here and but
 the beholder
 Wanting; which two when they once meet,
 The heart rears wings bold and bolder
 And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for
 him off under his feet.]

c. St. Francis of Assisi's relationship to creatures
 is based upon the gift of knowledge.

3. The gift of knowledge often results in a conviction of
 the vanity of things, and a deeper conversion to God.

a. Thus, it involves not abstract knowledge, but
 "heart" knowledge.

b. So the gift of knowledge often results in a more
 complete detachment from "creatures" (All that is
 not God).

4. In terms of associating the gift of knowledge with the
 beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall
 be comforted," St. Augustine identifies the specific
 application of the gift as a self-knowledge which leads
 one to God.

G. Understanding

1. While the gift of knowledge pertains to seeing
 creatures in their relationship to God, the gift of
 understanding involves insight (or penetration) into
 supernatural truths for the sake of our salvation.

2. Thus, the gift of understanding supplements the virtue
 of faith: while faith enables us to assent to revealed
 truths, the gift of understanding gives us insight into
 the meaning of such revealed truths.

3. Perhaps the best examples involves the insightful
 penetration of images or metaphors or types in bible
 study:

a. St. Paul's insight that ~~that~~ the rock which produced water in the desert for the Israelites is a type for Christ who gives us the living water of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 10.4).

b. My experience of an insight when first baptized in the Spirit that the bronze serpent held up by Moses to save the people from death caused by the seraph serpents foreshadowed Christ's being lifted up on the cross: all who turn to him shall be saved.

c. Another example, but not involving typology: St. Paul's insight into the mystery of God's will that all things shall be restored and united in Christ (Eph. 1.9)

4. The gift of understanding presupposes that we know that our end is God himself, that we are created for him and that our purpose is to live for him. Thus, St. Ignatius's First Principle and Foundation is an example of the gift of understanding:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

[Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.]

(Puhl, The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Loyola UP 1951. 12)

5. Thus, the gift of understanding penetrates realities, truths which are mysteries of the faith, and yet are necessary for our salvation. The gift of understanding can be a participation in contemplation.

H. Wisdom

1. While the gift of understanding gives us insights into particular truths or mysteries of the faith piecemeal, the gift of wisdom integrates these insights in an experiential knowledge of God himself.

2. Just as prudence integrates and governs through reason the virtues, the gift of wisdom governs and integrates the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

3. The gift of wisdom is rooted in charity. It proceeds from charity and leads back to it. It differs from charity in this way: charity enables us to love God in himself; wisdom enables us to know God in his goodness because we taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps.34.8)-
-we experience God in his goodness.

a. Ps. 63 exemplifies this knowledge: "My soul is feasted with marrow and fat, and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips, when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the watches of the night" (v.5-6).

b. Hopkins portrays such a heart knowledge of God's goodness as biting into a plum in "The Wreck of the Deutschland": "How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe/Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,/Gush! - flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,/ Brim, in a flash, full!"

4. Thus, the gift of wisdom involves contemplation.

5. It also involves practical judgment: from this experiential knowledge of God one can make better judgments about what is goodness itself, and thus, what is good to do. The gift of wisdom enables us to judge things from God's perspective and to live in a way which is pleasing to Him.

III. How grow in the spiritual gifts? (cf. Martinez 126-7).

A. Because charity is the root of the gifts, grow in charity. When we love God and others as God does, it opens us up to the action of the Holy Spirit because God is love.

B. Secondly, grow in virtue. As we grow in virtue, we prepare the ground, our human faculties, to receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Grace builds upon nature.

C. Pray for the gifts. The Novena to the Holy Spirit is a good example of a traditional prayer which invokes the aid of the Holy Spirit and particularly seeks these spiritual gifts.

D. Be responsive to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Be obedient to Him.

IV. Conclusion

A. We began with an overview of the human being, the virtues, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the infusion of the theological virtues and the spiritual gifts designed to help us grow in holiness.

B. The moral virtues, gathered around prudence, or right reason, enable the natural man to order his own appetites to objective reality, to the Truth.

C. These natural virtues are elevated and strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit once one becomes a Christian.

D. Along with the Holy Spirit, which is the very life of God, the Christian receives the theological virtues, which order him to his eternal end, God himself, and enable him to relate to God.

E. Besides the theological virtues, God gives us the spiritual gifts of Is. 11.2-3 as permanent dispositions, or spiritual equipment, which enable us to receive and follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit in his work of making us holy. These gifts complete and perfect the virtues.