



# Priestly People

SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

June 2020 - Vol. 36 No. 6

## *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

The *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* are “permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1830).



**There are seven *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*:**

***Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord.***

A *Gift of the Holy Spirit* is an ability of the soul to do something. What is it the Gifts help us to do? They help us respond with ease to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit in his love for us wants to inspire us from time to time – perhaps continually. But that is not enough – we need to be open and respond to His inspirations.

The *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* are like spiritual vitamins that strengthen us to listen and respond to His inspirations. Another example would be the hearing aids that some people use to hear and understand better what is being said. The Gifts are like hearing aids attached to the “ears” of the heart.

The prophet Isaiah lists the seven *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (11:3). There are many more gifts but these seven are traditionally listed as the *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*.

In the Bible the number seven signifies a fullness. By referring to “seven” Gifts, the Bible is telling us that the *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* add a certain fullness to our lives as Christians.

Part of the “fullness” of our Christian life is sharing in the Priesthood of Christ – whether in the form of being an ordained priest and/or as a member of Christ’s Priestly People. A *Gift of the Holy Spirit* helps us to respond with ease to the Holy Spirit’s inspirations!

# *Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

## **PIETY**

Of all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit perhaps the Gift of Piety is the least understood and appreciated. The word “pious” perhaps calls to mind the image of a person with hands folded and eyes raised to heaven with a sentimental expression. Although there is something good in such a description, most of us feel uncomfortable with being characterized in that way.

The Gift of Piety, however, is not defined by external appearances. Piety, rather, has something to do with a filial affection towards God (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 121, Art. 1) It is our love as sons and daughters for God.

To understand a little better the Gift of Piety, we could ask the question, “Why do I obey God?” One person may obey God out of fear of hell or purgatory. The great German Philosopher Immanuel Kant said that we obey God because it is a sense of duty, we all have written deep within our souls. But the best reason for obeying God is because we love Him because He is our Father in heaven, who created us, loves us, and infinitely desires our love in return. That is the Gift of Piety.

This type of Piety is not something we learn or acquire by ourselves, much like we might learn how to operate a computer or sing a song. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given to us at Baptism, and confirmed or strengthened when we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. All of us who are baptized have the gift of piety within us – at least in a dormant way, if not actually active all the time. We have an innate ability to think of, love and obey God as our Father.

If we stop and think about it, all of us can probably recall some occasion when our thoughts and hearts went out to God and we realized He has been watching over us and cares for us as a Father.

At other times, however, we may get in the habit of thinking of God as a punishing God, or one who is watching over us to see that we do our duty all the time. While there may be some half-truths in such

thoughts, these ways of thinking of God are likely not inspired by the Gift of Piety. These thoughts can get in the way of our Father-son, or Father-daughter relationship with God. Christ is our example – He was always filled with joy and deep love for His and Our Father. He possessed the Gift of Piety to the highest degree.

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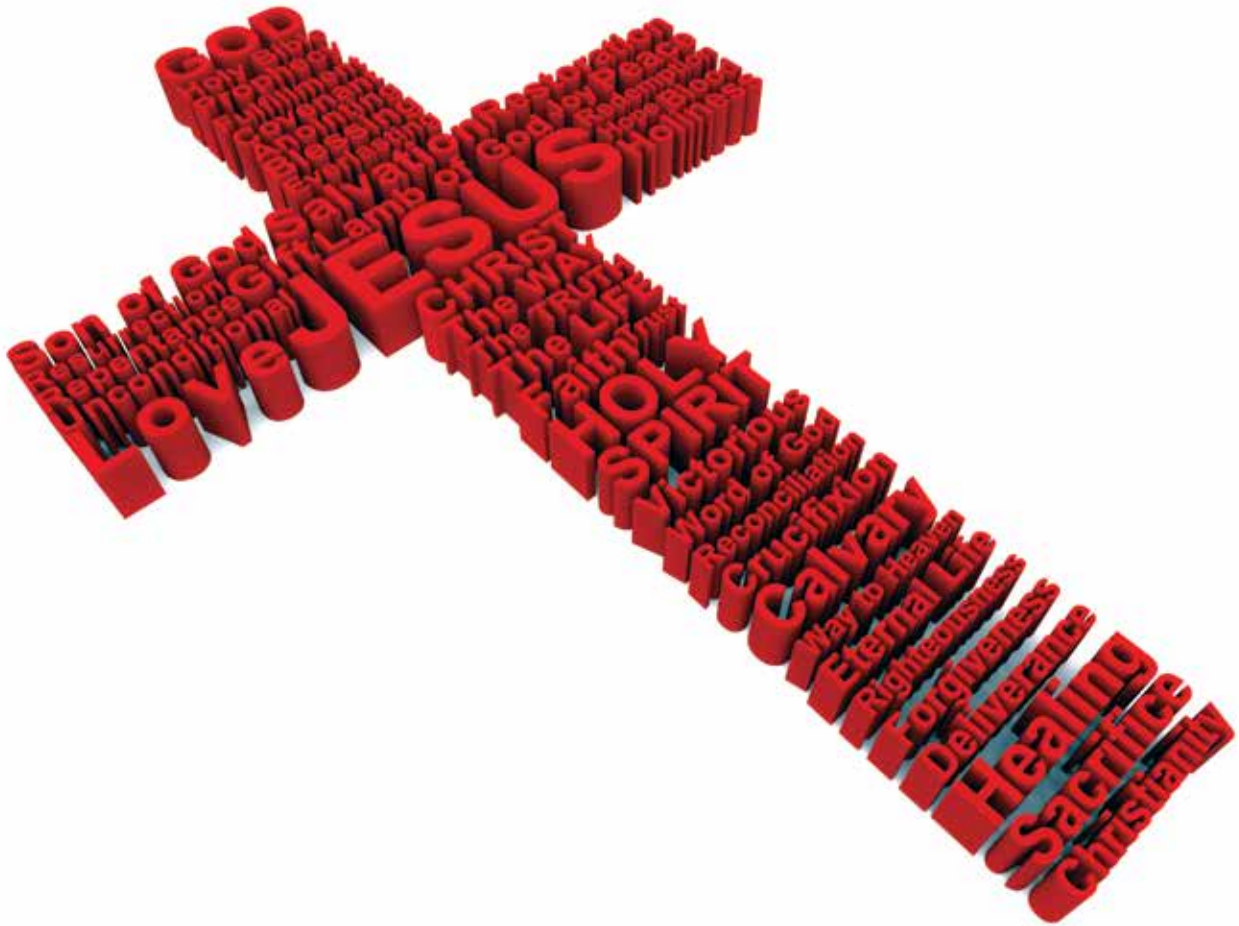
**He possessed the Gift of Piety to the highest degree.**

How can the Gift of Piety grow in us? One way is by reading the Psalms carefully and attentively. Perhaps you might take out your Bible and reflect on a psalm such as Psalm 37 or Psalm 91. In some Psalm editions it might be Psalms 36 and 90.

If you read these or any psalms slowly and with reflection, notice afterwards what has been happening within you. It is important to do this self-reflective exercise after reading and reflecting on the psalms – otherwise it could become a distraction to what the Holy Spirit may be inspiring in us. Likely the Gift of Piety was being given a chance to exercise itself.

You may also experience questions, doubts, resistance, etc. while reading the Psalms – these would be the sentiments of the soul which impedes the Gift of Piety. It would be very helpful to prayerfully review such sentiments with the help of the Spirit of God, possibly with a spiritual director.

Another way of helping the growth of the Gift of Piety in us is to not let the desire for material goods dominate our daily life. When we do not get the material things, we have set our heart on, we may be inclined to think God is not being fair to us. Again, by thinking too much of material things, we may feel we have to do everything ourselves to get them, and not trust that our heavenly Father knows what we need and will give us that which we need for our life.



**Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven  
and all these other things  
will be given to you!**

By way of extension, the Gift of Piety also pertains to affection for our parents and our country. Our parents and our native land are or should be images and instruments of God's gift of life and care for us. Loving obedience to them reflects our love for God. Love for parents and for country also extend to affection for our brothers and sisters, and our fellow citizens.

The affection and care that the Servants of the Paraclete and the Priestly People have for priests is also an extension of the Gift of Piety, because priesthood is an extension for God's presence and providence for His people.

An excellent example of piety in the Old Testament is Abraham. Genesis chapters 12 through 25 depict a continuing relationship between God and Abraham which is not based on fear or a sense of duty, but on a personal and intimate relationship between God and His faithful servant/friend Abraham.

Another example is Joseph, who out of loyalty to God and the Pharaoh would not defile himself by giving in to the seduction of Pharaoh's wife. Subsequently Joseph gave a beautiful example of piety in his love and forgiveness of his brothers, out of his love for his father Jacob.

When it is love, not duty that inspires our actions, we have attained to the highest degree of this Gift of the Holy Spirit. In it, the soul gives itself to God and to its neighbor without reserve, with all the generosity; with all the expansiveness of a supernatural and divine love. The Holy Spirit infuses into such a soul the desire to be united with Jesus Christ the Victim, in order to expiate the sins of the world ... through manifold areas of sacrifice and oblation which it willingly and eagerly takes upon itself.

This is the highest form of the Gift of Piety. It is found in Christ the High Priest. It is an ideal to which priests, religious and the Priestly People of God are called to participate in some way according to their condition in life.

Reprinted September 2000 *Priestly People*



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