



Priestly People

SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

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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).



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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

WISDOM

The greatest of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is the Gift of Wisdom. Of all the Gifts, it is the one that brings us closest to God. Through this Gift, we come to see all things, and especially people, the way God sees them. It is also the gift that brings the likeness of Christ in us to completion. An adaptation of a rather well-known story may help to illustrate this.

The story is about a monastery where the monks were not able to get along with each other. When life in the monastery became painfully difficult, the monks decided to ask help from a hermit who had a reputation for holiness and wisdom. In his heart, each monk hoped that this wise man would say just the right thing to each of the other monks so that they would change and be easier to live with.

The wise man asked to see each monk individually. He listened quietly to each monk as he poured out his heart about the difficulties he was experiencing from us fellow monks. Each night when he was by himself, the wise old hermit prayed and wept. He wept because he felt genuine compassion for each one he had seen during the day, he wept even more as he contemplated the sadness of the heavenly Father because the monks did not know how to recognize His Son's love in each other. When the hermit had finished listening to all the monks, he had an idea about what to do.

He called the monks together and told them that he had found out that one of them was Jesus Christ. He then gave them his counsel: they would find out who Jesus was by first thinking of Him in the silence of their hearts, and then treating each monk as if that one was Jesus Christ. Then when they discovered who Jesus was, peace and joy would return to the monastery.

To make a long story short, each monk gradually started to change the way he thought of and treated his brother monks. And, as each monk came to feel that he was being treated better – possibly even by one who as Jesus Himself – he in turn showed more

kindness toward his fellow monks. In this way a spirit of love grew in their midst and the monastery truly became a place where Jesus Christ was to be found.

The hermit was able to help because he allowed the Gift of Wisdom to direct him. If, from the story, we were to describe the essence of the gift of Wisdom, we might say:

Wisdom contemplates God in Himself, in everyone, and in everything.

And right after that we would have to add:

Wisdom is gentle, calm, and loving.

The hermit first listened to each monk's problem, but to understand each monk's difficulty he went directly to God. When he contemplated God's love for each monk, he was able to understand each monk's problem and provide a wise solution to that problem. That is the way with Wisdom.

The Gift of Knowledge could also have been part of the story about the monks and the monastery which learned to find Jesus in their midst. The difference, however, between Knowledge and Wisdom is that with the Gift of Knowledge we see God in His creatures, and ascend up by His Creatures to Himself; but with the Gift of Wisdom we gaze in faith upon God Himself, and, from the contemplation of His perfections descend to a knowledge of His works, or His creatures.

But Wisdom is more than simple *knowledge*, it is also love for what it sees in God, and for what it sees of creatures as coming from and created to go to God. The Book of Wisdom says that Wisdom is "holy, one, manifold, subtle, eloquent, undefiled... and loving that which is good, quick, gentle, kind, steadfast, secure," (*Wisdom* 7:21-25) This is the way the hermit acted from his heart toward God and toward the monks.

The Gift of Wisdom makes us like Jesus Christ!

The Gift of Wisdom is the greatest Gifts of the Holy Spirit because it produces in us the most faithful resemblance to Jesus Christ. We take on the likeness of Jesus Christ simply by exercising the Gift of Wisdom, that is, by contemplating God as Jesus does.

The wise old hermit helped the monks see something of God in each other. He – or rather the Gift of Wisdom – started them thinking of God in the silence of their heart and then had them practice thinking that one of their number was Christ. Mysteriously, as each monk practiced seeking God in himself and others, he himself began to take on the image and likeness of Christ.

Seeing Christ in Priests and all Persons.

The genius of the ministry of the Servants of the Paraclete and those who are associated with us should be to see Christ in Priests and all Persons.

Many of the recent documents from Pope John Paul II, such as *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (so named in Latin because of its opening words “I will give you Shepherds after my own heart”), speak of priesthood as configuration to Christ:

The Spirit, by consecrating the priest and configuring him to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd, creates a bond which, located in the priest’s very being, demands to be assimilated and lived out in a personal, free and conscious way through an ever richer communion of life and love and an ever broader radical sharing in the feelings and attitudes of Jesus Christ. (Pastores Dabo Vobis, n. 72).

Sometimes it is not easy to see Christ in a priest – especially if he appears to be unfaithful in some way to his vocation. As in the story of the hermit and the monks, it is important, however, for us to be particularly sensitive to the priest who may be experiencing difficulties, trying to see him and his life as God sees him.

With the Gift of Wisdom, we can see him as God sees him – not only as he is as a poor creature, but also as God in His love has destined him to become in his configuration to Christ. Seeing the priest in this way can be part of God’s mystical plan for calling forth and recreating Christ’s likeness in the priest.



Development of the Gift of Wisdom

How do we get or develop the wonderful Gift of Wisdom? It does not come through reading many books or by intense intellectual work on our part. Like all the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is given to us at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation. One of the best ways to help prepare the path for the flowering of this gift is to be faithful in following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in all matters. This we can do by simply and frequently asking ourselves what would God probably want me to do in this situation at this time? Another important way to experience and let this Gift grow in us is to exercise it by spending quiet time in simply thinking of and speaking with God.

And, finally of all, let us pray for this Gift to be given in even greater abundance to priests and each other. As Christ told us in His loving and stimulating way: ***If you being evil (as you are) know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to whomever asks for Him?***

With the Gift of the Holy Spirit we receive all Gifts in abundance. I like to think that the Gifts the Holy Spirit most desires to share with us is the Gift of His Wisdom – because it is the most perfect reflection of His life, with the Father and the Son, in the Trinity Itself.



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