

# The Gifts of the Holy Spirit



Understanding

Counsel

Knowledge

Fortitude

Wisdom

Piety

Fear of the Lord

*A catechetical reference for teaching Confirmation students about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit under the original titles.*

Dear Catechists,

In the Liturgy of Confirmation, there is a prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit with his seven Gifts on the candidates. The Holy See and the English-speaking Bishops of the world have now approved a new, more accurate translation of the whole Liturgy of Confirmation and of this prayer. We will be using this from now on. This translation goes back to the traditional names of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit found in the Catechism.

What the more recent Prayer called “right judgment” is now “**counsel**”; “courage” has become “**fortitude**”; “reverence” is now “**piety**”, and “**fear of the Lord**” replaces “wonder and awe”. The other three Gifts are still “**wisdom, understanding, knowledge**”. It’s not the Gifts that have changed, but just that the Church has restored their older names. However, it will require some adjustment to explain the Gifts by these names and avoid misunderstandings.

Preparation for confirmation, of course, is not just about the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. But they are an element within the broader catechesis concerning this Sacrament.

I hope this leaflet prepared by the Dominican Sisters in Elgin, and the material from Pope Francis, will be a help to you in this precious work for which I cannot thank you enough.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ *Hugh OSB*

Bishop of Aberdeen

## Why Do We Need the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit enable the believing, hoping and loving person to live the life of grace, of Christ, in an *inspired* way. They enable the person to change gear, as it were; not to live their Christian life in a merely plodding way, struggling along, but in some way as being carried. A favourite phrase here is that of St Paul, 'all who are *led* by the Spirit of

God are children of God.' A favourite image is



the difference between rowing and sailing. Through the gifts, the Holy Spirit can, as it were, fill the sails of the human being and lead him or her beyond their own limits.



The gifts in some sense fill the whole inner person. They come into play in all the different aspects of our lives.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are both passive and active. They are *capacities*, sensitivities, openness-es to the action of the Holy Spirit, and then, when touched by the Spirit, inspire, prompt, lead us to act in the Spirit-filled way.

They open the human being to 'life in the Spirit' in the full sense. In a certain sense, they define the mystical life. A 'mystic' is someone in whom these gifts are habitually activated, so that they are regularly living in an inspired way.

Through the Gifts, the Holy Spirit fills my mind and heart. He enables me to act with divine power for my wellbeing and that of others.



## Simple definitions and examples of the Gifts



By the gift of **wisdom**, we are attuned spontaneously to the purposes (the Wisdom) of God in our own lives and in the world around us. We order our lives by this. We judge spiritually, not in a merely human or worldly way; we share the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).

This is not just human wisdom. This gift enables us to see all things, events and people from God's perspective and trust that all things have a divine purpose of bringing good things to those who love God.



By the gift of **understanding**, we are given a certain intellectual penetration of the mysteries of faith. We begin to see what we believe. The faith lights up in our mind.

This gift gives us a deep conviction that all mysteries of faith, even the most difficult to grasp, are true and we can, with great confidence, build our lives on them.



By the gift of **knowledge**, we are able to relate our secular, scientific, professional knowledge to God as the Creator of everything. This is an extremely important gift for our everyday life. It enables us to see the most secular things as related to God and empowers us to bring holiness into every aspect of our life.

These three gifts have to do with our mind or intellect. The next two are more practical.

By the gift of **counsel**, we are able to make good decisions in life and choose the kind of life and work and relationships that will lead us to God

and eternal life. We're also enabled to help others find their path through life too. In this gift the Holy Spirit gives a divine insight to what we should do in a particular situation in the present moment or what someone else should do. It enables us to grasp with ease and swiftness what God's will is right here right now.



By the gift of *fortitude*, we have the courage to overcome the difficulties and opposition we may encounter in our Christian life and to persevere in our good choices. This is a very important gift in the modern world. It also inspires us and gives us conviction to be witnesses of Christ and

His love for everyone. It gives us courage that is both bold and gentle. This gives enables us to give all to Christ and for Him.

The final two gifts are more immediately religious.

By the gift of *piety*, we are enabled, not to be 'pious' in the modern (pejorative) sense, but have a truly filial relationship with God the Father, aware of ourselves as his beloved children, trusting in his providence, eager to acknowledge and worship and pray to him, enjoying everything associated with him. This gift enables us to see and treat God as the loving Father always and in every circumstance.

Moreover, as a consequence be begin to see everyone as our brothers and sisters and are inspired to treat them with the reverence belonging to them as God's children.

By the gift of *fear*, we are enabled to have a horror of sin – not to run away from God but to discern and run away from whatever would separate us from him. This gift does



not mean the fear of God; instead it fill us with the perfect love of God, which makes us fear all that would hurt, even in the smallest manner, our relationship with him.

## FUN IDEAS FOR TEACHING ABOUT CONFIRMATION

### PENTECOST: SETTING THE APOSTLES AFLAME!

Activity: Read the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) and makes sure the students understand the story. Break the students into groups. Give each group an aluminum roasting pan and fixings for a fire. Tell them they need to prepare the tin in a way that the fire will ignite quickly but also burn for a long time. Give each group one match and see whose burns the best. (Must be done outdoors)

Application: Have each group brainstorm why their fire ignited quickly, burned long, etc. Ask them: "What does this have to do with Confirmation?" We too need to be disposed to receive the Spirit. As a class, brainstorm important elements in preparing our souls for Confirmation.

Prayer: Give the kids about ten minutes to meditate on how they can prepare their hearts for Confirmation. Have quiet music playing and, if possible, do this in the chapel.

### POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ST. PETER

Activity: After you have taught the story of Pentecost, use the life of St. Peter to give a Scriptural account of the power of the Spirit. Break the class into partners. Have partners choose one of these three sets of passages:

Before the Holy Spirit Came Down Upon Peter	After the Holy Spirit Came Down Upon Peter
The Walking on Water Matthew 14: 22-33	Cure of the Crippled Beggar Acts of the Apostles 3: 1-10
The First Prediction of the Passion Matthew 16: 21-23	Herod's Persecution of the Christians Acts of the Apostles 12: 1-5
Peter's Denial of Jesus Matthew 26: 69-75	Peter's Speech at Pentecost Acts of the Apostles 2: 22-25 and 37-39

### Application:

1. Read the first passage assigned with your partner aloud.
2. Discuss what the main points of the story are (setting, plot, characters, etc)
3. Discuss what Peter's strengths and weaknesses are.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 on the second passage assigned.
5. Create a visual interpretation of the transformation of Peter before the coming of the Holy Spirit and then after. Include pictures, words that describe him, quotes, etc. Be creative!!!

Prayer: Give the children about ten minutes at the end of class to answer these questions: 1) What qualities did Peter have that you would like to have? 2) How can the Holy Spirit help you grow like Peter? 3) Ask the Holy Spirit for what you need in your life right now in order to be happy and holy.

## THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE SAINTS

It is helpful to teach the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with real people because the Gifts can be abstract for children. The saints are great witnesses of how the Gifts work in the lives of people like us.

Activity: Do this lesson after you have done the unit on Pentecost and St. Peter, if possible. Each week for seven weeks, begin the class with a lesson on the life of a saint. Use his or her life as a model of one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Below are some saints with corresponding gifts.

Fear of the Lord: Blessed Miguel Pro, St. Augustine

Piety: St. Francis of Assisi, St. John Bosco, St. Bernadette

Fortitude: St. Maria Goretti, Blessed Jose Sanchez, Saint Gianna Molla

Counsel: Father Vincent Capodanno, Saint Hedwig

Knowledge: Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, St. Albert the Great

Understanding: St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Thomas Aquinas

Wisdom: St. John Paul the Great, Solomon

After you have had time to study all the Gifts and the saints, have a small prayer service in the chapel. In the front, have seven red votive candles burning and give each youth an unlit tea light. In front of each candle have the name of one of the Gifts. At the beginning, pray to the Holy Spirit to open the minds and hearts of everyone to know which Gift he or she needs right now. Have one main candle burning on the table as well.

Read the basic definition (listed above) for each gift. Then have the children pray about which gift they most need at their Confirmation. Call the children one by one and allow them to light their candle from the main candle and place it in front of the gift they need. After all are finished, give time for quiet prayer and then sing a song of praise.

## Other Resources

Saint Card Game:

<http://looktohimandberadiant.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/beatitudes-modern-saints.html>

Modern Day Saints:

<http://lifeteen.com/blog/biggest-best-list-confirmation-saints-guys-girls/>

Video: How Does the Church Declare Someone a Saint?

<http://bustedhalo.com/video/how-does-the-catholic-church-declare-someone-a-saint>

Prayer for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: <http://catholic-christian.tumblr.com/image/50726481996>

*(Written Winter 2016 in response to the Bishop's Conference request that all Gifts of the Holy Spirit be referred to by their original titles in the liturgy of Confirmation)*

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