

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Seven Gifts of the Spirit

As Christians, we often hear references to “The Seven Gifts of the Spirit.” The idea of spiritual gifts is found in this passage from Isaiah 11:3a:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse;
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

Before we look at our spiritual gifts, we need to understand what we mean by the “gifts of the spirit.” These gifts come to us as the Holy Spirit touches our lives. We believe the gifts are important because they enable us to surpass our ordinary abilities. They are graces that give us more insight and ability to act as Christians.

All the sacraments are “acts of the Holy Spirit,” although the sacrament of confirmation is where spiritual gifts are specifically mentioned. Inspired by the words of Isaiah, the ritual of confirmation names the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

“Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their Helper and Guide. Give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Right Judgement, the Spirit of Knowledge and Reverence. Fill them with the Spirit of Wonder and Awe in Your presence.”

Let us look more closely at these gifts and see what they mean for us and for our Church.

The Spirit of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom comes from a very profound source within us. It is that mysterious quality that gives us insight into such divine mysteries as God’s mercy, tenderness, and presence. It gives us the ability to see the divine presence at work even in painful situations. Wisdom is also the source of peacemaking since it brings to an end

any doubts about God’s love for us and for others. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to love God.

The Spirit of Understanding

When we are given the gift of understanding, we can see beyond superficial meanings. In Scripture (Proverbs 4:7) we are told, “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”

When we are given understanding, we see the world with more depth. For example, when we receive a sacrament, we understand its significance beyond the words of the liturgy. We may also find that when someone speaks to us of a problem they are having, understanding gives us the insight to see beyond their words to a deeper hurt. We are then able, through the gift of understanding, to respond to them in a deeper and more healing way.

The Spirit of Right Judgment

The gift of right judgment is a movement of the Holy Spirit taking us beyond where human common sense may go. It is discernment and inquiry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Often it leads us to consult with others and to seek advice.

We become aware of the value of our social and spiritual community. The Holy Spirit guides us in our behavior and in practical down to earth ways. This gift gives us the right judgment to know when changes and decisions are necessary in our lives.

The Spirit of Knowledge

The gift of knowledge is not a gift for scholarship. It is a gift for learning. It prompts us to educate ourselves by becoming aware of the tradition of others as they speak about the mysteries of God. When we receive the gift of the spirit of knowledge, we find ourselves enjoying learning. We are often inspired by our past. We are encouraged by the wisdom of others. The Trappist Monk Thomas Keating, writes that the gift of knowledge shows us that God alone can satisfy us and that the pleasures and satisfactions of life all have limitations. He maintains that with the gift of knowledge, we discover God's presence in everything.

The Spirit of Wonder and Awe

No longer do we understand the gift of wonder and awe to be servile fear or fear of punishment. Rather we see with new eyes the glory of God's presence in the world around us. We marvel at the beauty of the earth, and the joy of loving and caring people. We find ourselves responding to God as a loving child toward a loving parent.

The Spirit of Reverence

The gift of the spirit of reverence allows us to appreciate the gap between God and ourselves. We experience God as friend. Sometimes we experience God as loving mother. Pope John XXIII wrote in his journal that God lavished upon him "motherly care."

Not only does reverence affect our image of God, it also makes us careful of offending God. We are therefore mindful of our own personal integrity.

The Gift of Courage

A result of *all the gifts* of the Spirit is the gift of courage. When we receive this gift, we are able to surpass our ordinary abilities. We are able to stand up for what we know to be right. We are able to move with confidence and endurance. We can become a channel for spiritual energy to help bring to earth God's intention for creation.

We may think of needing courage only in terms of public issues. However, we also need the gift of courage as we meet the challenges of daily life. It is easy to avoid difficult life changes and choices. We are often tempted, instead of being courageous and facing problems, to give way to feelings of frustration or self pity. Courage helps us to receive all the gifts of the Spirit and to share them with others in our world.

Join Us

We are offering a special Pentecost Novena Meditation beginning nine days before Pentecost on our website <http://srsclare.com/pentecost-novena>. We invite you to join us as we prepare for the feast of Pentecost.

Sr. Laura and the Sisters of St. Clare

Sisters of St. Clare

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