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## ***THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT***

*We often hear about them, but what are they?*

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as traditionally defined, are:

### **1) WISDOM**

*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” James 3:17*

We receive the gift of wisdom to help us understand the things of God, and to direct our whole life and all our actions to his honor and glory. Wisdom helps us see the world differently and from God’s point of view.

### **2) UNDERSTANDING**

*“Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.” – St. Augustine of Hippo*

The gift of understanding enables us to know more clearly the mysteries of faith. “I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people and I will be their God” (Jeremiah 24:7).

### 3) COUNSEL

*“Let us employ the gift of reason for actions of prudence. Let us learn now abstinence from what is wicked, that we may not be forced to learn in the future. Let us employ life as a training school for what is good; and let us be roused to the hatred of sin. Let us bear about a deep love for the Creator; let us cleave to Him with our whole heart; let us not wickedly waste the substance of reason, like the prodigal.” – St. Clement of Alexandria*

The gift of counsel helps us to discern what is right and what is wrong. It assists us in our ability to choose the path of God. “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matthew 7: 13-14).

### 4) KNOWLEDGE

*“The gift of knowledge puts us in tune with God’s gaze on things and on people...” – Pope Francis*

When we receive the gift of knowledge, it enables us to discover God’s will in all things. “For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

### 5) PIETY (also known as Reverence)

*“Be brave and try to detach your heart from worldly things. Do your utmost to banish darkness from your mind and come to understand what true, selfless piety is. Through confession, endeavor to purify your heart of anything which may still taint it. Enliven your faith, which is essential to understand and achieve piety.” – St. John Bosco*

The gift of piety helps us to love God, our merciful Father, and to obey his precepts out of love for him. It moves our heart from serving God out of duty and obligation into a relationship of love. “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15).

### 6) Fortitude (also known as Courage)

*“Though the path is plain and smooth for men of good will, he who walks it*

*will not travel far, and will do so only with difficulty, if he does not have good feet: that is, courage and a persevering spirit.” – St. John of the Cross*

While the gifts of knowledge and wisdom help us know what we should do, the gift of fortitude strengthens our will so that we can actually accomplish what is true, good and beautiful. This gift is sometimes called the gift of courage and helps a person stand firm, even when persecuted, in doing the right thing.

“[T]hey will lay their hands on you and persecute you ... This will be a time for you to bear testimony ... I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict ... you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But not a hair of your head will perish” (Luke 21:12-17).

#### 7) **FEAR OF THE LORD** (also known as Wonder and Awe)

*“We must fear God out of love, not love Him out of fear.” – St. Francis de Sales*

Commonly misunderstood as the fear of a wrathful God ready to smite us, the gift of fear of the Lord is actually more positive than negative. It consists of a recognition of the grandeur of God and his primacy over all things. Fear of the Lord recognizes that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe and we are his creatures.

This gift helps us to understand how we must depend on God for everything. In other words, he is God, we are not. “[I]f God so clothes the grass which is alive in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you” (Luke 12:27).