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Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Find and read Isaiah 11:1-9. Here are the essential words:

“On that day: 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.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb... their young shall lie down together.... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

WISDOM is the first gift of the Spirit, and is the foundation of all the other gifts. **Wisdom** brings us into **the mind of God** – so that, like Jesus – we think the same kinds of thoughts as our Father in Heaven. Wisdom also brings us into **Jesus’ Sacred Heart**, so that we accept to have the same impulses to love everyone as Jesus Himself has – it brings us to love God above all things, to love one another as Jesus loves us – even our enemies – and our neighbor as our self. It is the Holy Spirit who makes wisdom happen in us.

UNDERSTANDING is how the Holy Spirit turns on the light in our mind to see what the Word of God means, and it also **makes clear** to us **the differences** between truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil. We see how the Word of God connects to life, people, ourselves, and all of reality. We come to recognize God’s ways of thinking, loving, and acting in our lives, in all people, and in creation, with **understanding**.

COUNSEL shows us how to choose to face difficulties rather than avoid them. **Counsel** helps us realize we are not alone – God is with us – helps us ask the Holy Spirit for **guidance**, and helps us endure the “heat” as we wait for the Spirit’s inner light to show us what to do. Counsel makes us **willing to listen**, especially to elders, to authorities, and **to receive** the teaching of the Church. Counsel helps us **accept advice** and also **give it**. Counsel helps us bring others and ourselves to **know and gladly do the will of God**.

COURAGE This gift is also called **might** or **fortitude** – it is the **strength** we need inside our mind, heart, and spirit to put into action what counsel has shown us as the best thing to do. By helping us rely on the power of God, it frees us from the burden of trying to do it

all by ourselves. Courage doesn't make our fears evaporate, but it helps us not let our fears prevent us from acting. Courage helps us **face the challenges** of life and of our Christian vocation; to **persevere** in suffering, persecution and pain; and to **go beyond** what we thought our limits were when we are under trial or in trouble.

KNOWLEDGE As understanding shows us God's ways and brings us the counsel we need in real life situations, and as we freely choose to act with courage to do God's will, this precious gift opens up. We are now living with God's own life inside us – we are living like God lives – and the Holy Spirit gives us a whole new way of tasting and enjoying all good things, people, and the divine persons. This gift is first-hand, direct, personal **experience** and **knowledge** of everything in the same way that God Himself knows them. We enter into a **personal relationship** with the Father, the Son – Jesus, the Holy Spirit, each and every human being, every creature: animal, bird, fish, reptile, insect, plant, rock, water, sun, stars, heavens – everyone and everything!

FEAR OF THE LORD All this new knowledge of personal experiencing really turns on the lights inside us and we begin to see how GREAT God is, how huge the universe of God's creation is, and the result is we begin to feel quite small in the middle of it all. This gift is so huge that it's difficult to describe, so we need other words to talk about it. It gives us impressions of **awe** and feelings of **wonder** in the face of God, of other persons, of the complex beauty of everything that is real. **Fear of the Lord** has nothing to do with being afraid – but it is all about being very impressed – we become so impressed that we just have to, we really want to give honor and thanks to God, to worship and praise Him, to hear more and more of what He has to say to us. It is fear of the Lord that drives us and motivates us to go to Church, to pray, to want to receive Jesus in his mysterious Holy Communion, and to confess our sins to Him on a regular basis. It is fear of the Lord that brings us to want to **reverence** others and to **respect** every living thing. Finally, it brings us to want to take care of others and of all living creatures, and to keep God's order in nature and in the world around us.

PIETY is the name of this gift of the Holy Spirit mostly on the outside – we look **pious** as other people look at us and we are full of this gift – but on the inside, it really looks like what Isaiah prophesied about Jesus: “His **delight** shall be in the fear of the Lord.” We know that the Holy Spirit is activating this gift inside us when we **take delight** in all that the other gifts of the Spirit bring into our lives. We take delight in being more and more filled with the awe and wonder that come from experiencing more and more personally and directly the presence, action and love of the three divine Persons in the universe, in other people, and in our own lives. Piety fills us so much with the **delight and pleasure of God's love** and company that it makes us very **bold** to approach the Father with prayers – mostly for others and for the world, that every person might also come to the great delight of knowing God's love for themselves. Piety unleashes **true love** in us and binds us to our family and each member in our family with **unbreakable bonds**. These are the same bonds of love that make us **loyal** to God, to his Church, and to our country. Piety makes it possible for us to put God first, others second, and ourselves third.