

Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

Adapted from *Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine* (p. 257)
and *The Spirit Sets Us Free* (William H. Sadlier, Inc. (pp. 38-39)

From the *Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine*:

The Holy Spirit is himself the *gift* (cf. Jn 14:26), the source of all comfort and grace, proceeding from the Father and the Son. As the sanctifier and giver of gifts, the Spirit is the source of all the gracious mercies by which the triune God calls us to holiness and salvation. It is through the Spirit of God that all the ordinary gifts of the Church, the rich hierarchical and sacramental gifts, constantly bear fruit in the holiness of lives. The Spirit also blesses the Church with always fresh and joyful charismatic gifts (CCC 797-801).

But there are seven gifts known most commonly as the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are gifts that Isaiah prophesied would dwell in their fullness in the Messiah (cf. CCC 1831): wisdom, understanding, counsel (right judgment), fortitude (courage), knowledge, piety (reverence), and fear of the Lord (awe and wonder).

These gifts are infused also into the heart of every baptized person, every member of Christ, together with grace and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love). They are necessary for all; but the Fathers and saints speak of their growing influence on the faithful as they become more mature in holiness of life.

Early stages of Christian life are more laborious: The devout soul struggles as a boatman struggles with oars. But the gifts of the Holy Spirit help the soul that has drawn nearer to the Lord to make progress with greater ease and more fervent love: They are like sails by which the graces of the Spirit move one forward more easily. By these gifts “the soul is furnished and strengthened to be able to obey God’s voice and impulse more easily and promptly” (Pope Leo XIII, encyclical *On the Holy Spirit*, 1891).

Those guided by the Spirit bring forth in their lives excellent actions, more shining fruits of the Spirit’s many gifts. The Church traditionally lists these twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (cf. CCC 1832; Gal 5:22-23).

From *The Spirit Sets Us Free*:

The Spirit does not give these gifts as full-blown powers that work in us whether we cooperate or not. If that were true, every confirmed person would be a saint! Rather, they are given to us as graces to be used and nurtured and developed. They are given to us as powers in potential. That means they have to be activated by us. When we begin to use these powers in love, for the service of others, they grow stronger day by day.

Wisdom: We do not always have a clear idea of the details of God’s plan for us. We exercise the gift of wisdom by being attentive, through prayer and the experiences of life, to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. *Do I find the Holy Spirit in the experiences of my daily life?*

Understanding: We develop the gift of understanding by trying to see others through the eyes of Christ. This is not easy to do. It demands compassion, patience, and generosity. *Do I try to look at others in this way?*

Right Judgment: There are choices and decisions in life that require serious attention, reflection, and prayer. These three qualities are essential to the gift of right judgment. *How am I trying to develop my conscience?*

Courage (Fortitude): Christ's message so often goes against the prevailing values of our world. To live and proclaim the Gospel is to risk contempt and ridicule. It does indeed take the Spirit's gift of courage. *Do I risk going against the crowd to witness to the values of Jesus?*

Knowledge: We cannot proclaim what we do not know. The gift of knowledge urges us to exercise our mind and will to learn God's plan for us and for the world. *Do I make the effort to learn about the issues and challenges of the times in order to make Christian decisions about them?*

Reverence (Piety): Belief in God's presence to all creation draws us into reverence -- the gift that helps us find the sacred in all things. *Do I treat others and all creation with love and respect?*

Wonder and Awe (Holy Fear): Through the gift of wonder and awe we recognize and rejoice in God's glory -- his presence and love -- filling all creation. *Is there time for prayer and worship in my life? Do I marvel at the wonders of God's creation?*

These gifts of the Holy Spirit are graces that give us the strength to live the moral life. Because of these graces, we are open to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. How blessed we are that the Holy Spirit so richly provides us with the strength needed to be followers of Christ.