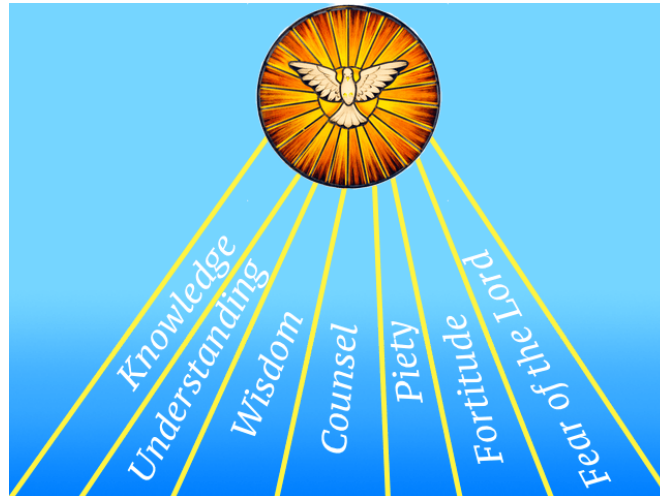


A Novena to the Holy Spirit from Ascension to Pentecost



Introduction

St John Vianney once preached to the parishioners and pilgrims of Ars: “Without the Holy Spirit all is cold; therefore, when we feel we are losing our fervor, we must instantly make a novena to the Holy Spirit to ask for faith and love... See, when we have made a retreat how we are full of good desires: these good desires are the breath of the Holy Ghost, which has passed over our souls, and has renewed everything like the warm wind which melts the ice and brings back the spring... When we have the Holy Spirit, the heart expands and bathes itself in divine love. And so we should say every morning, ‘O God, send my Thy Spirit to teach me what I am and what Thou art.’” In encouraging us to make a novena in honor of the Holy Spirit, St John Vianney is leading us to the oldest of all novenas since it was first made at the direction of Our Lord Himself when He sent His apostles back to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. We are invited to “join together with one heart in constant prayer” (Acts 1:14), in imitation of Mary and the disciples in those nine days in the Upper Room between Ascension and Pentecost. With them, we ask Jesus to send afresh his Holy Spirit upon us so that our individual lives, the lives of our families and communities, and the life of the Church may be renewed.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

(To be recited every day of the novena)

Holy Spirit, on my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I offer myself, body and soul to You, Eternal Spirit of God. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In You I live and move. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You. Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for Your light, and listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch over me in my weakness. Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus and looking at His Five Wounds, and trusting in His Precious Blood and adoring His opened Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and every-where, "Speak Lord for Your servant is listening." Amen.

Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven You promised to send the Holy Spirit to finish Your work in the souls of Your Apostles and Disciples. Grant the same Holy Spirit to me that He may perfect in my soul, the work of Your grace and Your love. Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom that I may despise the perishable things of this world and only desire the things that are eternal; the Spirit of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of Your di-vine truth; the Spirit of Counsel that I may always choose the way of pleasing God and gaining heaven; the Spirit of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with You and overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation; the Spirit of Knowledge that I may know God and myself and grow perfect on the path to holiness; the Spirit of Piety that I may seek to serve God and His Church; and the Spirit of Fear and Awe that

I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to displease Him. Mark me, dear Lord, with the sign of Your true disciples and inspire me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.

A Prayer to the Holy Trinity

Father, pour out Your Spirit upon your people and grant us a new vision of Your glory, a new experience of Your power a new faithfulness to Your Word and a new consecration to Your service so that Your love may grow among us and Your kingdom come through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Lord Jesus, let Your Spirit rest upon our parishes, schools and homes that they may be places of love and truth where the weak are made strong and the strong learn humility and all of us learn the wisdom that alone comes from You. Amen

Holy Spirit, Comforter and Sanctifier, melt our hearts that we may accept Your love. Renew our minds that we may know Your truth. Strengthen our will that we may follow You faithfully, through Christ our Lord. Amen

A Prayer of St Augustine

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may be holy.

A Prayer for Priests

Jesus, Good Shepherd, You sent the Holy Spirit to guide Your Church and lead the faithful to You through the ministry of Your priests. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit grant to Your priests wisdom in leading, faithfulness in teaching and holiness in celebrating Your sacred mysteries. Make them helpful brothers of one another, and understanding fathers of all Your people. At this Pentecost time, renew in Your priests a deeper faith, a stronger hope and a greater love for You, Lord. Amen

Day One - A New Birth in the Holy Spirit

Nicodemus said, "How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?" Jesus replied: "In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through the water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John, 3: 4-8

Reflection

Jesus shows a new way - a way of becoming like a child again, of placing ourselves once more in the hands of our Creator. It is a way of trust and transformation - of letting go of our human certainties and securities, of taking off our cloaks and masks so as once again to feel the Spirit's breath against our skin. It is a call to become both a new person and a new people: the people of God, His holy Church. Do I recognize in myself the need, the desire for this newness of life? Jesus wants to give us this new life in the Spirit, who will guide and lead us from darkness to light, from half-heartedness to the fullness of life.

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit! Fall afresh on Your people Purify and cleanse us. Open our hearts to receive Your gifts So that we may be born again in You.
Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Two - Fear of the Lord

Then Peter addressed them, "I now really understand," he said, "that God has no favorites, but that anybody who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." ...While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, "Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" He then gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts, 10: 34-5; 44-7

Reflection

During this novena we shall pray for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3). We begin with the fear for the Lord. This gift brings us to our knees in reverence and awe before the glory and greatness of God, like Moses before the burning bush. In the heat of His love, we are confronted with all that is unworthy within us – those attitudes and patterns of behavior which threaten to separate us from Him. In His greatness, we see our smallness. And yet, we are not crushed nor led into despair. For the fear of the Lord gives us not only the desire not to offend God, but also the hope that God will give us the grace that we need in order to truly live lives pleasing to Him. Do I have this hope? Holy fear is not a human panic which paralyses or defeats us, but it is an awe-struck silence we experience when the veil between heaven and earth is removed and, for a moment at least, we see our own reflection in the eyes of our Father.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Holy Fear! Penetrate our hearts with the revelation of Your love, Inspire in us a spirit of reverence and awe Help us to turn away from all that offends You So that we may stand before You in honesty and truth. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Three – Wisdom

“Consider, brothers, how you were called; not many of you are wise by human standards, not many influential, not many from noble families. No, God chose those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise; he chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong... It is by him that you exist in Christ Jesus who for us was made wisdom from God.” 1 Cor., 1:26-7, 29

Reflection

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom (Psalm 111). For wisdom is not acquired through human effort but through God’s grace and revelation. It can only be given by the Spirit of God to those who are fully open in their lives to Him. Am I willing to be weak before God, to recognize my need for Him to be my strength? All the degrees and diplomas the world has to offer cannot explain to us the mystery or the simplicity of God. Only He can open our eyes to begin to see as He sees, to love as He loves. The gift of wisdom is a journey into the heart of God.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Wisdom! Bend our proud hearts and stubborn wills
Empty us of all folly and façade
Reveal to us the mysteries of Your ways
So that we may follow You in humility and trust. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Four – Understanding

Just at this time, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do.” Luke, 10: 21

Reflection

If wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, understanding is the desire to grasp the revealed truths of our faith, as passed on in the teaching of the Church, and to live our lives according to these truths. Through the gift of understanding we receive a deeper appreciation of the mysteries of God’s plan of salvation and how we can be faithful to this plan, so that we are not confused by the conflicting messages of our modern culture about the right way to live. We come to see God’s saving hand at work throughout human history and also through-out our own individual life history. This helps us to radiate to others the faith which we profess. The creed becomes not a formula to memorize but an expression of our belonging, like a child leaping joyfully into their mother’s arms. What questions and doubts about my faith do I need to bring to God at this time in my life so that He can help me to understand more clearly?

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Understanding! Enlighten us with Your grace Renew in us a childlike faith and trust Be the beginning and end of all that we do So that we may reveal to others the depth of Your love. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Five – Counsel

The Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, “It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand over this duty. We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.” The whole assembly ap-proved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them. Acts, 6: 1-7

Reflection

Counsel builds on both wisdom and understanding. It inspires us to judge rightly what we should do in a particular situation, to act correctly in times of trial, to do as Jesus would do. It frees us from the limitations of our purely emotional responses and personal prejudices, and leads us from a self-centered “me” to a self-sacrificing “we”. What decisions and choices do I most need God’s guidance for in my life at this time? The gift of counsel allows us to apply the principles of our faith to the decisions and actions of our daily lives, and so to be truly an “alter Christus”, “another Christ” to the world.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Counsel! Help and guide us in all Your ways Inspire in us the desire to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God so that we may show the face of Christ to the world. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Six – Fortitude

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. "Look! I can see heaven thrown open," he said, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." All the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they made a concerted rush at him, thrust him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and said aloud, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And with these words he fell asleep. Acts 7: 55-60

Reflection

If the gift of counsel teaches us how to act, then fortitude is the gift which gives us the strength to carry out those actions. It is often called courage, but it is different from much of what we think of as courage today. For it does not lead us to seek danger for danger's sake – it is not foolishness or recklessness, bravado or provocation. No, it is the gift which allows us firstly to recognize when it is right to make a stand, to put our head above the parapet and then to overcome fear and to re-main steady in the face of opposition. Am I prepared to take a risk for God? Fortitude is the laying down of human weapons and defenses, so that we can put on God's armor, like David before Goliath.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Fortitude! Calm our fears Strengthen us in our weakness
Sustain us in times of trial and adversity So that we may give faithful
witness to Your glory. Amen

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Seven – Knowledge

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep."

John: 10, 14-15

Reflection

God, who is eternal and invisible, nevertheless wants to make Himself known to us in ways that we can understand. God wants us to seek the face behind all faces, to listen for the Word behind all words. To know and be known by another is to enter into the deepest core of their being, to be in intimate personal relationship with them. Do I really hunger for a deeper intimacy with God? Am I content to stay in by the shore and in the shallows or do I want to be led further and further out onto the lake, exploring the depths of God's mystery? The gift of knowledge allows us to enter into this developing relationship with God, and so in turn to see our lives ever more as He sees them. As we come to know God more clearly, we are able to follow him more faithfully as we can better discern between the impulses of temptation and the inspirations of grace, between the dead-end streets of illusion and the sacred paths which lead us back to the Father.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Knowledge! Give us a new heart Fill us with a longing to know You more clearly, to follow You more nearly and to love You more dearly day by day. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Eight – Piety

And all who shared the faith owned everything in common: they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among them-selves according to what each one needed. Each day, with one heart, they regularly went up to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone.” Acts, 2: 43-7

Reflection

As we are drawn into deeper relationship with God and with each other, we naturally want to live in right relationship with our Creator and the whole human family, which has been created in His image. The gift of piety inspires in us that instinctive affection for God which makes us want to worship and praise Him, both in word and deed. This means that piety stirs us to reflect the Father’s love to others, to be people whose everyday lives are motivated by charity, justice and a concern for those most in need. Love of God, love of others. Am I truly striving to love as Jesus loves? Filled with holy piety, may the practice of our faith be trans-formed from burdensome duty to joyful service. Where there is love, there is no labor.

Prayer

Come, O Spirit of Piety! Lift up our hearts in worship and praise Help us to honor and respect the work of Your hands May we be your instruments in bringing creation to its fulfilment through lives of joyful and generous service. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...

Day Nine - The Fruits of the Spirit

"[We] ask that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will and so be able to lead a life worthy of the Lord, a life acceptable to him in all its aspects, bearing fruit in every kind of good work and growing in knowledge of God, fortified, in accordance with his glorious strength, with all power always to persevere and endure, giving thanks with joy to the Father who has made you able to share the lot of God's Holy people and with them to inherit the light." Col., 1: 9-12

Reflection

The gifts we have prayed for are to bear rich fruit in our lives, not for our own glory but for the glory of God. In the great variety of communities he served, St Paul recognized a recurring pattern of such fruits: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5: 22). Which of these fruits do I most hunger for? In imitation of Mary, we are invited to give birth to new life through the Holy Spirit working within us. May each one of us, by responding generously to God's calling, bring forth fruit in the Church as a living branch of the true vine which is Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, Fill the hearts of Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit, and we shall be created, and You will renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Prayer of Consecration to the Holy Spirit

Prayer for the Seven Gifts...