

Novena to the Holy Spirit with Reflections from Pope Francis

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he commanded his apostles to “wait for the promise of the Father” in Jerusalem. Nine days later the apostles celebrated the Jewish feast of Pentecost, and God fulfilled his promise by sending the Holy Spirit. This was the first “novena.”

A novena is a traditional prayer devotion in which prayers are said for nine consecutive days. By praying a novena to the Holy Spirit, we can imitate the example of Mary and the apostles when they prayed and waited for the Holy Spirit. We can prepare our hearts for the coming of the Holy Spirit in a new way.

There are many options online, and you can adapt these to fit the needs of your own family. Traditionally, the Novena to the Holy Spirit starts nine days before Pentecost, but you can start and pray it anytime you feel appropriate.

You may also wish to include other prayers and songs/hymns about the Holy Spirit.

You may wish to conclude each day by praying the Our Father and Hail Mary, and then seven Glory be to the Father prayers.

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.
Amen

Day 1

After Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, the disciples were very scared, and they stayed in the upper room with the doors locked. The risen Christ appeared to them many times, and they believed and rejoiced. Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended to the Father. He told them that he must go to the Father so that the Holy Spirit might be sent. Jesus told them to wait in the city until they had been clothed in the power from on high. He said "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth." Fifty days after the resurrection it happened! Let's read about the day of Pentecost.

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.
Acts 2:1-4

What was the Holy Spirit like on the day of Pentecost? What effect did the Holy Spirit have on the disciples?

These gifts of the Holy Spirit are available for us even today. The prophet Isaiah tells us about the gifts of the Spirit.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

We received the gifts of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized. And when we are confirmed they are brought to life in a new way.

For the next nine days we will think about one of these gifts each day, and we will pray in a special way for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our parish, our family and in ourselves.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 2 – Fear of the Lord/Reverence

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

What does “Fear of the Lord” mean? Sometimes, this gift is called Reverence or Awe. (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis’ reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Fear of the Lord and Reverence so that we may be reminded how small we are before God, our Father, who loves us so much. He has given us so many gifts –the gifts of creation, our families, our lives. He will always take care of us. We are his children.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 3 – Piety/ Delight in the Fear of the Lord

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

We call this gift piety. What does it mean to delight in the Lord? What is piety? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Piety and stir in us gratitude and praise and joy to be children of God.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 4 – Fortitude (Strength)

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

We call this gift of the Holy Spirit strength or fortitude. What does this mean? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Strength and Fortitude so that we might have the courage to do what is right.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 5 – Knowledge

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

We do you think the gift of knowledge means? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Knowledge so that we may come to know God more and more each day.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 6 – Understanding

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

What do you think the gift of understanding is like? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Understanding so that we might understand the things that happen
as God understands them, and recognize how God is working in our lives,
and to understand, above all, the Word of God in the Gospel.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 7 – Counsel

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

What do you think the gift of counsel is like? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Counsel, the right judgement to see what is right and what is wrong,
to see the best way to follow God's plan,
to bring light to our heart and to recognize the Lord's will.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 8 – Wisdom

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

What do you think the gift of wisdom is like? (You may wish to read or include some of Pope Francis' reflection on this gift. See below.)

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Wisdom, the wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God's eyes,
to feel with God's heart, to speak with God's words.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Day 9 – The Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5: 22-23

A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit...by their fruits you will know them. Matthew 7:17-20

How do we know if we are filled with the Holy Spirit? What fruits do we see when we allow the grace of the Holy Spirit to be effective in our lives? The tradition of our Church lists 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit:

charity
generosity
joy
gentleness
peace
faithfulness
patience
modesty
kindness
self-control
goodness
chastity

O Lord Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven,
you promised to send the Holy Spirit to your disciples.
Send your same Holy Spirit to us so that we too may serve you as disciples.

Grant us Wisdom, the wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God's eyes,
to feel with God's heart, to speak with God's words.

Grant us Understanding so that we might understand the things that happen
as God understands them, and recognize how God is working in our lives,
and to understand, above all, the Word of God in the Gospel.

Grant us Counsel, the right judgement to see what is right and what is wrong,
to see the best way to follow God's plan,
to bring light to our heart and to recognize the Lord's will.

Grant us Strength and Fortitude so that we might have the courage to do what is right.

Grant us the Knowledge so that we may come to know God more and more each day.

Grant us Fear of the Lord and Reverence so that we may be reminded how small we are before God, our Father, who loves us so much. He has given us so many gifts –the gifts of creation, our families, our lives. He will always take care of us. We are his children.

Grant us Piety and stir in us gratitude and praise and joy to be children of God.

Holy Spirit, we offer ourselves to you.
Give us grace to say to you always and everywhere,
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Amen.

Reflections from Pope Francis on the 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 of 7)

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we begin a series of catecheses on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You know that the Holy Spirit constitutes the soul, the life blood of the Church and of every individual Christian: He is the Love of God who makes of our hearts his dwelling place and enters into communion with us. The Holy Spirit abides with us always, he is always within us, in our hearts.

The Spirit himself is "the gift of God" par excellence (cf. Jn 4:10), he is a gift of God, and he in turn communicates various spiritual gifts to those who receive him. The Church identifies seven, a number which symbolically speaks of fullness, completeness; they are those we learn about when we prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation and which we invoke in the ancient prayer called the "Sequence of the Holy Spirit". The gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

1. The first gift of the Holy Spirit according to this list is therefore wisdom. But it is not simply human wisdom, which is the fruit of knowledge and experience. In the Bible we are told that Solomon, at the time of his coronation as King of Israel, had asked for the gift of wisdom (cf. 1 Kings 3:9). And wisdom is precisely this: it is the grace of being able to see everything with the eyes of God. It is simply this: it is to see the world, to see situations, circumstances, problems, everything through God's eyes. This is wisdom. Sometimes we see things according to our liking or according to the condition of our heart, with love or with hate, with envy.... No, this is not God's perspective. Wisdom is what the Holy Spirit works in us so as to enable us to see things with the eyes of God. This is the gift of wisdom.

2. And obviously this comes from intimacy with God, from the intimate relationship we have with God, from the relationship children have with their Father. And when we have this relationship, the Holy Spirit endows us with the gift of wisdom. When we are in communion with the Lord, the Holy Spirit transfigures our heart and enables it to perceive all of his warmth and predilection.

3. The Holy Spirit thus makes the Christian "wise". Not in the sense that he has an answer for everything, that he knows everything, but in the sense that he "knows" about God, he knows how God acts, he knows when something is of God and when it is not of God; he has this wisdom which God places in our hearts.

The heart of the wise man in this sense has a taste and savour for God. And how important it is that there be Christians like this in our communities! Everything in them speaks of God and becomes a beautiful and living sign of his presence and of his love. And this is something that we cannot invent, that we cannot obtain by ourselves: it is a gift that God gives to those who

make themselves docile to the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit within us, in our heart; we can listen to him, we can listen to him. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, he teaches us this way of wisdom, he endows us with wisdom, which is seeing with God's eyes, hearing with God's ears, loving with God's heart, directing things with God's judgement. This is the wisdom the Holy Spirit endows us with, and we can all have it. We only have to ask it of the Holy Spirit.

Think of a mother at her home with the children; when one does something the other thinks of something else, and the poor mother goes to and fro with the problems of her children. And when mothers get tired and scold the children, is that wisdom? Scolding children — I ask you — is this wisdom? What do you say: is it wisdom or not? No! Instead, when the mother takes her child aside and gently reproves him, saying: "Don't do this, because...", and explains with great patience, is this the wisdom of God? Yes! It is what the Holy Spirit gives us in life! Then, in marriage for example, the two spouses — the husband and wife — argue, and then they don't look at each other, or if they do look at each other, they look at each other with displeasure: is this the wisdom of God? No! Instead, if one says: "Ah well, the storm has passed, let's make peace", and they begin again and go forward in peace: is this wisdom? [the people: Yes!] Now, this is the gift of wisdom. May it come to our homes, may we have it with the children, may it come to us all!

And this cannot be learned: this is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must ask the Lord to grant us the Holy Spirit and to grant us the gift of wisdom, that wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God's eyes, to feel with God's heart, to speak with God's words. And so, with this wisdom, let us go forward, let us build our family, let us build the Church, and we will all be sanctified. Today let us ask for this grace of wisdom. And let us ask Our Lady, who is the Seat of Wisdom, for this gift: may she give us this grace. Thank you!"

Intelligence / the Intellect / Understanding

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (2nd of 7)

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning.

After having considered wisdom as the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, today I would like to focus on the second gift, that is, understanding. We are not dealing here with human understanding, with the intellectual prowess with which we may be more or less endowed. Rather, it is a grace which only the Holy Spirit can infuse and which awakens in a Christian the ability to go beyond the outward appearance of reality and to probe the depths of the thoughts of God and his plan of salvation.

The Apostle Paul, addressing the community at Corinth, aptly describes the effects of this gift — that is, what the gift of understanding does in us — and Paul says this: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:9-10). This of course does not mean that a Christian can comprehend all things and have full knowledge of the designs of God: all of this waits to be revealed in all its clarity once we stand in the sight of God and are truly one with Him. However, as the very word suggests, understanding allows us to "intus legere", or "to read inwardly": this gift enables us to understand things as God understands them, with the mind of God. For one can understand a situation with human understanding, with prudence, and this is good. But to understand a situation in depth, as God understands it, is the effect of this gift. And

Jesus desired to send us the Holy Spirit so that we might have this gift, so that all of us might understand things as God understands them, with the mind of God. What a beautiful gift the Lord has given us. It is the gift with which the Holy Spirit introduces us into intimacy with God and makes us sharers in the plan of love which he has for us.

It is clear then that the gift of understanding is closely connected to faith. When the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts and enlightens our minds, he makes us grow day by day in the understanding of what the Lord has said and accomplished. Jesus himself told his disciples: I will send you the Holy Spirit and he will enable you to understand all that I have taught you. To understand the teachings of Jesus, to understand his Word, to understand the Gospel, to understand the Word of God. One can read the Gospel and understand something, but if we read the Gospel with this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can understand the depths of God's words. And this is a great gift, a great gift for which we all must ask and ask together: Give us, Lord, the gift of understanding.

There is an episode in the Gospel of Luke which aptly expresses the depths and power of this gift. After witnessing the death on the Cross and burial of Jesus, two of his disciples, disappointed and grief stricken, leave Jerusalem and return to their village called Emmaus. As they are on their way, the risen Jesus draws near and begins talking with them, but their eyes, veiled with sadness and despair, are unable to recognize him. Jesus walks with them, but they are so sad, in such deep despair, that they do not recognize him. When, however, the Lord explains the Scriptures to them so that they might understand that he had to suffer and die in order then to rise again, their minds are opened and hope is rekindled in their hearts (cf. Lk 24:13-27). And this is what the Holy Spirit does with us: he opens our minds, he opens us to understand better, to understand better the things of God, human things, situations, all things. The gift of understanding is important for our Christian life. Let us ask it of the Lord, that he may give us, that he may give us all this gift to understand the things that happen as he understands them, and to understand, above all, the Word of God in the Gospel. Thank you."

Counsel

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (3rd of 7)

General Audience, Wednesday 7 May 2014 -

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

We heard in the Reading of the passage from the Book of Psalms: "the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me" (Ps 16[15]:7). This is another gift of the Holy Spirit: the gift of counsel. We know how important it is in the most delicate moments to be able to count on the advice of people who are wise and who love us. Now, through the gift of counsel, it is God himself, through his spirit, who enlightens our heart so as to make us understand the right way to speak and to behave and the way to follow. But how does this gift work in us?

1. When we receive and welcome him into our heart, the Holy Spirit immediately begins to make us sensitive to his voice and to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our intentions according to the heart of God. At the same time, he leads us more and more to turn our interior gaze to Jesus, as the model of our way of acting and of relating with God the Father and with the brethren. Counsel, then, is the gift through which the Holy Spirit enables our conscience to make a concrete choice in communion with God, according to the logic of Jesus and his Gospel.

In this way, the Spirit makes us grow interiorly, he makes us grow positively, he makes us grow in the community and he helps us not to fall prey to self-centredness and one's own way of seeing things. Thus the Spirit helps us to grow and also to live in community. The essential condition for preserving this gift is prayer. We always return to the same theme: prayer! Yet prayer is so important. To pray with the prayers that we all learned as children, but also to pray in our own words. To ask the Lord: "Lord, help me, give me counsel, what must I do now?". And through prayer we make space so that the Spirit may come and help us in that moment, that he may counsel us on what we all must do. Prayer! Never forget prayer. Never! No one, no one realizes when we pray on the bus, on the road: we pray in the silence of our heart. Let us take advantage of these moments to pray, pray that the Spirit give us the gift of counsel.

In intimacy with God and in listening to his Word, little by little we put aside our own way of thinking, which is most often dictated by our closures, by our prejudice and by our ambitions, and we learn instead to ask the Lord: what is your desire? What is your will? What pleases you? In this way a deep, almost connatural harmony in the Spirit grows and develops within us and we experience how true the words of Jesus are that are reported in the Gospel of Matthew: "do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak but the spirit of your Father speaking through you" (10:19-20). It is the Spirit who counsels us, but we have to make room for the Spirit, so that he may counsel us. And to give space is to pray, to pray that he come and help us always.

3. As with all of the other gifts of the Spirit, then, counsel too constitutes a treasure for the whole Christian community. The Lord does not only speak to us in the intimacy of the heart; yes, he speaks to us, but not only there; he also speaks to us through the voice and witness of the brethren. It is truly a great gift to be able to meet men and women of faith who, especially in the most complicated and important stages of our lives, help us to bring light to our heart and to recognize the Lord's will!

I remember once at the Shrine of Luján I was in the confessional, where there was a long queue. There was even a very modern young man, with earrings, tattoos, all these things.... And he came to tell me what was happening to him. It was a big and difficult problem. And he said to me: "I told my mother all this and my mother said to me, go to Our Lady and she will tell you what you must do". Here is a woman who had the gift of counsel. She did not know how to help her son out of his problem, but she indicated the right road: go to Our Lady and she will tell you. This is the gift of counsel. That humble, simple woman, gave her son the truest counsel. In fact, this young man said to me: "I looked at Our Lady and I felt that I had to do this, this and this...". I did not have to speak, his mother and the boy himself had already said everything. This is the gift of counsel. You mothers who have this gift, ask it for your children, the gift of giving good counsel to your children is a gift of God.

Dear friends, Psalm 16[15], which we heard, invites us to pray with these words: "I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (vv. 7-8). May the Spirit always pour this certainty into our heart and fill us thus with the consolation of his peace! Always ask for the gift of counsel."

Fortitude

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (4th of 7)

General Audience, Wednesday 14 May 2014

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In recent catecheses we reflected on the first three Gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding and counsel. Today let us consider what the Lord does: He always comes to sustain us in our weakness and he does this by a special gift: the gift of fortitude.

1. There is a parable told by Jesus which helps us to grasp the importance of this gift. A sower goes out to sow; however, not all of the seed which he sows bears fruit. What falls along the path is eaten by birds; what falls on rocky ground or among brambles springs up but is soon scorched by the sun or choked by thorns. Only what falls on good soil is able to grow and bear fruit (cf. Mk 4:3-9; Mt 13:3-9; Lk 8:4-8). As Jesus himself explains to his disciples, this sower represents the Father, who abundantly sows the seed of his Word. The seed, however, often meets with the aridity of our heart and even when received is likely to remain barren. However, through the gift of fortitude, the Holy Spirit liberates the soil of our heart, he frees it from sluggishness, from uncertainty and from all the fears that can hinder it, so that Lord's Word may be put into practice authentically and with joy. The gift of fortitude is a true help, it gives us strength, and it also frees us from so many obstacles.

2. There are also difficult moments and extreme situations in which the gift of fortitude manifests itself in an extraordinary, exemplary way. This is the case with those who are facing particularly harsh and painful situations that disrupt their lives and those of their loved ones. The Church shines with the testimony of so many brothers and sisters who have not hesitated to give their very lives in order to remain faithful to the Lord and his Gospel. Even today there is no shortage of Christians who in many parts of the world continue to celebrate and bear witness to their faith with deep conviction and serenity, and persist even when they know that this may involve them paying a higher price. We too, all of us, know people who have experienced difficult situations and great suffering. Let us think of those men, of those women who have a difficult life, who fight to feed their family, to educate their children: they do all of this because the spirit of fortitude is helping them. How many men and women there are — we do not know their names — who honour our people, who honour our Church, because they are strong: strong in carrying forward their lives, their family, their work, their faith. These brothers and sisters of ours are saints, everyday saints, hidden saints among us: the gift of fortitude is what enables them to carry on with their duties as individuals, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, citizens. We have many of them! Let us thank the Lord for these Christians who live in hidden holiness: the Holy Spirit is within them carrying them forward! And it will benefit us to think about these people: if they do all of this, if they can do it, why can't I? And it will also do us good to ask the Lord to give us the gift of fortitude.

3. We need not think that the gift of fortitude is necessary only on some occasions or in particular situations. This gift must constitute the tenor of our Christian life, in the ordinary daily routine. As I said, we need to be strong every day of our lives, to carry forward our life, our family, our faith. The Apostle Paul said something that will benefit us to hear: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). When we face daily life, when difficulties arise, let us remember this: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me". The Lord always strengthens us, he never lets strength lack. The Lord does not try us beyond our possibilities. He is always

with us. "I can do all things in him who strengthens me".

Dear friends, sometimes we may be tempted to give in to laziness, or worse, to discouragement, especially when faced with the hardships and trials of life. In these cases, let us not lose heart, let us invoke the Holy Spirit so that through the gift of fortitude he may lift our heart and communicate new strength and enthusiasm to our life and to our following of Jesus."

Knowledge

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (5th of 7)

General Audience, Wednesday 21 May 2014 -

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to highlight another gift of the Holy Spirit: the gift of knowledge. When we speak of knowledge, we immediately think of man's capacity to learn more and more about the reality that surrounds him and to discover the laws that regulate nature and the universe. The knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit, however, is not limited to human knowledge; it is a special gift, which leads us to grasp, through creation, the greatness and love of God and his profound relationship with every creature.

1. When our eyes are illumined by the Spirit, they open to contemplate God, in the beauty of nature and in the grandeur of the cosmos, and they lead us to discover how everything speaks to us about Him and His love. All of this arouses in us great wonder and a profound sense of gratitude! It is the sensation we experience when we admire a work of art or any marvel whatsoever that is borne of the genius and creativity of man: before all this, the Spirit leads us to praise the Lord from the depths of our heart and to recognize, in all that we have and all that we are, an invaluable gift of God and a sign of his infinite love for us.

2. In the first Chapter of Genesis, right at the beginning of the Bible, what is emphasized is that God is pleased with his creation, stressing repeatedly the beauty and goodness of every single thing. At the end of each day, it is written: "God saw that it was good" (1:12, 18, 21, 25): if God sees creation as good, as a beautiful thing, then we too must take this attitude and see that creation is a good and beautiful thing. Now, this is the gift of knowledge that allows us to see this beauty, therefore we praise God, giving thanks to him for having granted us so much beauty. And when God finished creating man he didn't say "he saw that this was good", but said that this was "very good" (v. 31). In the eyes of God we are the most beautiful thing, the greatest, the best of creation: even the Angels are beneath us, we are more than the angels, as we heard in the Book of Psalms. The Lord favours us! We must give thanks to him for this. The gift of knowledge sets us in profound harmony with the Creator and allows us to participate in the clarity of his vision and his judgement. And it is in this perspective that we manage to accept man and woman as the summit of creation, as the fulfillment of a plan of love that is impressed in each one of us and that allows us to recognize one another as brothers and sisters.

3. All this is a source of serenity and peace and makes the Christian a joyful witness of God, in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi and so many saints who knew how to praise and laud his love through the contemplation of creation. At the same time, however, the gift of knowledge helps us not to fall into attitudes of excess or error. The first lies in the risk of considering ourselves the masters of creation. Creation is not some possession that we can lord over for our own pleasure; nor, even less, is it the property of only some people, the few: creation is a gift, it

is the marvellous gift that God has given us, so that we will take care of it and harness it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude. The second erroneous attitude is represented by the temptation to stop at creatures, as if these could provide the answer to all our expectations. With the gift of knowledge, the Spirit helps us not to fall into this error.

But I would like to return to the first of these incorrect paths: tyranny over rather than the custody of creation. We must protect creation for it is a gift which the Lord has given us, it is God's present to us; we are the guardians of creation. When we exploit creation, we destroy that sign of God's love. To destroy creation is to say to God: "I don't care". And this is not good: this is sin.

Custody of creation is precisely custody of God's gift and it is saying to God: "thank you, I am the guardian of creation so as to make it progress, never to destroy your gift". This must be our attitude to creation: guard it for if we destroy creation, creation will destroy us! Don't forget that. Once I was in the countryside and I heard a saying from a simple person who had a great love for flowers and took care of them. He said to me: "We must take care of the beautiful things that God has given us! Creation is ours so that we can receive good things from it; not exploit it, to protect it. God forgives always, we men forgive sometimes, but creation never forgives and if you don't care for it, it will destroy you".

This should make us think and should make us ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of knowledge in order to understand better that creation is a most beautiful gift of God. He has done many good things for the thing that is most good: the human person."

Piety

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (6th of 7)

General Audience, Wednesday 4 June 2014 -

in Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese & Spanish

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning.

Today we would like to dwell on a gift of the Holy Spirit that often becomes misconstrued or treated superficially, but rather touches the very heart of our Christian life and identity: it is the gift of piety.

It should be clarified immediately that this gift is not to be identified with having compassion for someone, feeling pity on one's neighbour; rather, it indicates our belonging to God and our profound relationship with Him, a bond that gives meaning to our life and keeps us sound, in communion with Him, even during the most difficult and tormenting moments.

This relationship with the Lord is not intended as a duty or an imposition. It is a bond that comes from within. It is a relationship lived with the heart: it is our friendship with God, granted to us by Jesus, a friendship that changes our life and fills us with passion, with joy. Thus, the gift of piety stirs in us above all gratitude and praise. This is, in fact, the reason and the most authentic meaning of our worship and our adoration. When the Holy Spirit allows us to perceive the presence of the Lord and all his love for us, it warms the heart and moves us quite naturally to prayer and celebration. Piety, therefore, is synonymous with the genuine religious spirit, with filial trust in God, with that capacity to pray to him with the love and simplicity that belongs to those who are humble of heart.

If the gift of piety makes us grow in relation to and in communion with God and leads us to live as his children, at the same time, it helps us to pass this love on to others as well and to recognize them as our brothers and sisters. And then, yes, we will be moved by feelings of piety — not pietism! — in relation to those around us and to those whom we encounter every day. Why do I say “not pietism”? Because some think that to be pious is to close one’s eyes, to pose like a picture and pretend to be a saint. In Piedmont we say: to play the “mugna quacia” [literally: the pious or serene nun]. This is not the gift of piety. The gift of piety means to be truly capable of rejoicing with those who rejoice, of weeping with those who weep, of being close to those who are lonely or in anguish, of correcting those in error, of consoling the afflicted, of welcoming and helping those in need. The gift of piety is closely tied to gentleness. The gift of piety which the Holy Spirit gives us makes us gentle, makes us calm, patient, at peace with God, at the service of others with gentleness.

Dear friends, in the Letter to the Romans the Apostle Paul states: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship”, from which, “we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Rm 8:14-15). Let us ask the Lord for the gift of his Spirit to conquer our fear, our uncertainty, and our restless, impatient spirit, and to make of us joyful witnesses of God and of his love, by worshipping the Lord in truth and in service to our neighbour with gentleness and with a smile, which the Holy Spirit always gives us in joy. May the Holy Spirit grant to all of us this gift of piety.”

Fear of the Lord

Catechesis by Pope Francis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (7th of 7)

General Audience, Wednesday 11 June 2014 -

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

The gift of fear of the Lord, which we are speaking about today, concludes the series of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It does not mean being afraid of God: we know well that God is Father, that he loves us and wants our salvation, and he always forgives, always; thus, there is no reason to be scared of him! Fear of the Lord, instead, is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands. This is fear of the Lord: abandonment in the goodness of our Father who loves us so much.

1. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, he infuses us with consolation and peace, and he leads us to the awareness of how small we are, with that attitude — strongly recommended by Jesus in the Gospel — of one who places his every care and expectation in God and feels enfolded and sustained by his warmth and protection, just as a child with his father! This is what the Holy Spirit does in our hearts: he makes us feel like children in the arms of our father. In this sense, then, we correctly comprehend how fear of the Lord in us takes on the form of docility, gratitude and praise, by filling our hearts with hope. Indeed, we frequently fail to grasp the plan of God, and we realize that we are not capable of assuring ourselves of happiness and eternal life. It is precisely in experiencing our own limitations and our poverty, however, that the Holy Spirit comforts us and lets us perceive that the only important thing is to

allow ourselves to be led by Jesus into the Father's arms.

2. This is why we need this gift of the Holy Spirit so much. Fear of the Lord allows us to be aware that everything comes from grace and that our true strength lies solely in following the Lord Jesus and in allowing the Father to bestow upon us his goodness and his mercy. To open the heart, so that the goodness and mercy of God may come to us. This is what the Holy Spirit does through the gift of fear of the Lord: he opens hearts. The heart opens so that forgiveness, mercy, goodness and the caress of the Father may come to us, for as children we are infinitely loved.

3. When we are pervaded by fear of the Lord, then we are led to follow the Lord with humility, docility and obedience. This, however, is not an attitude of resignation, passivity or regret, but one of the wonder and joy of being a child who knows he is served and loved by the Father. Fear of the Lord, therefore, does not make of us Christians who are shy and submissive, but stirs in us courage and strength! It is a gift that makes of us Christians who are convinced, enthusiastic, who aren't submissive to the Lord out of fear but because we are moved and conquered by his love! To be conquered by the love of God! This is a beautiful thing. To allow ourselves to be conquered by this love of a father, who loves us so, loves us with all his heart.

Yet, we should take care, for the gift of God, the gift of fear of the Lord is also an "alarm" against the obstinacy of sin. When a person lives in evil, when one blasphemes against God, when one exploits others, when he tyrannizes them, when he lives only for money, for vanity, or power, or pride, then the holy fear of God sends us a warning: be careful! With all this power, with all this money, with all of your pride, with all your vanity, you will not be happy. No one can take it with them to the other side: not the money, power, vanity or pride. Nothing! We can only take the love that God the Father gives us, God's embrace, accepted and received by us with love. And we can take what we have done for others. Take care not to place your hope in money or pride, power or vanity, because they can promise you nothing good! I am thinking, for example, of people who have responsibility for others and allow themselves to become corrupt; do you think a corrupt person will be happy on the other side? No, all the fruit of his corruption has corrupted his heart and it will be difficult for him to go to the Lord. I am thinking of those who live off human trafficking or slave labour; do you think these people who traffic persons, who exploit people through slave labour have love for God in their hearts? No, they haven't fear of the Lord and they are not happy. They are not. I am thinking of those who manufacture weapons for fomenting wars; just think about what kind of job this is. I am certain that if I were to ask: how many of you manufacture weapons? No one, no one. These weapons manufacturers don't come to hear the Word of God! These people manufacture death, they are merchants of death and they make death into a piece of merchandise. May fear of the Lord make them understand that one day all things will come to an end and they will have to give account to God.

Dear friends, Psalm 34 tells us to pray like this: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (vv. 6-7). Let us ask the Lord for the grace to unite our voice to that of the poor, to welcome the gift of fear of the Lord and to be able to recognize ourselves, together with them, as cloaked in the mercy and love of God, who is our Father, our dad. Let it be."

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