

The Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit

See CCC §1832

The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory.

Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-control, and Chastity. (See Gal 5:22-23.)

Living a spiritual life -- which we are all striving to do in varying degrees -- bears witness to the fact that we belong to God as His beloved children. This witness involves us completely; it involves every aspect of our lives as Paul the Apostle says in Romans 10:31: "Whatever you eat, then, or drink, and whatever else you do, do it all for the glory of God." This is to truly live in communion with God's Spirit. And if we truly live in communion with God's Spirit, then that Spirit will manifest itself through us in all that we do and say. We refer to this manifestation of God's Spirit within us as the fruit of God's Spirit. The way God's Spirit manifests itself most convincingly is through its fruit. St. Paul in Galatians names the fruits of God's Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control." The fruits of God's Spirit really speak for themselves. When we manifest them in our lives, especially in the ways we relate to one another, they become the manifestation of God's presence in the world.

For our part, when we express in our lives these fruits of God's Spirit, we expect they will have some sort of influence on the world we live in, or at least on that small portion of the world we inhabit. We want to be productive; we want to see the tangible results of our work. But oftentimes, and unfortunately, we are disappointed with the results of our efforts; sometimes our efforts seem to be a waste of time as far as others are concerned. This, of course, can bring on discouragement in our practice of virtue; we can become weary of the battle. It is at times like these that we must turn to Christ -- to Jesus Himself Who died as a failure on a cross; to all appearances there was no success there to be proud of. Still, the fruitfulness of Jesus' life is beyond any human measure. Jesus was, indeed, the ultimate manifestation of the fruits of His Father's Spirit. And we, as faithful witnesses of Jesus, must trust that our lives too, will be fruitful, even though we cannot always see the fruit. Indeed, like Moses who led his people to the Promised Land but was not allowed to enter it himself, we may never see the fruit of our lives for it may only become visible to those who live after us. What is important in the present time is how well we love. We must leave the rest up to God, faithfully trusting that He will make our love fruitful, whether we actually see that fruitfulness or not.

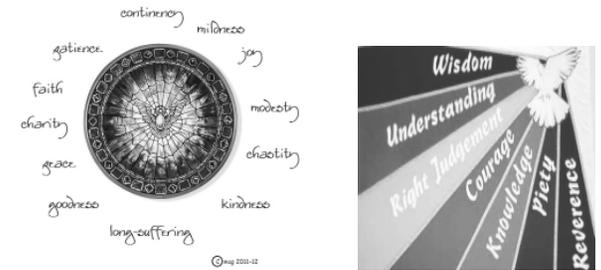
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The Seven Gifts and Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

See CCC §1830

Isaiah 11: 2-3.



The gifts of the Holy Spirit belong in their fullness to Christ, the Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

Fear of the Lord, Piety, Knowledge, Fortitude, Counsel, Understanding, Wisdom

Recall the first coming of the Holy Spirit in the form of fiery tongues upon the apostles and disciples. For nine days they had been waiting and praying for this Spirit of truth and love, promised by Christ. They were fearful, uncertain, doubtful and weak. But, what a change came over them. With the Holy Spirit in their hearts they become strong and courageous, certain and zealous. They went forth from that upper room, guided by the Divine Dove, the Holy Spirit whom really taught the apostles all things.

To understand more clearly and fully what the Holy Spirit did on that first Pentecost, and what He does for us during the Sacrament of Confirmation, we want to consider His gifts and workings. Ages before the coming of Christ, this work was foretold. After the Assyrians had attacked and almost annihilated Israel, God had mercy on His chosen people, and promised them assistance in the words of the prophet Isaiah, 11:1-3: "And there shall come forth a shoot of the stock of Jesse and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and godliness. And He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." There we have the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. What do they mean?

1. Wisdom is that gift by which we raise our minds above the fleeting things of earth and think of things eternal. It lights up the mind, helping the intellect to look at revealed truth in the sublime sunshine of heaven. It helps us taste God, as it were and love God.

2. Understanding is that gift which throws a searching light upon the meaning of revealed truth. It helps us comprehend and know, as far as men can, the truths of faith and the divine mysteries. It tells us exactly what this or that revealed truth really means.

3. Counsel is that gift which makes clear to us, amid the uncertainties of life,

what makes for the glory of God, our own salvation, and the salvation of our neighbor. Counsel helps our practical minds to see what should be done in individual cases and what are the best means to do it. Counsel points the path when the path is none too certain.

4. Fortitude is the gift, which helps us, with valor and courage, to observe faithfully the laws of God and His Church. It helps us overcome the dangers and difficulties on our Christian pathway to God.

5. Knowledge is the gift by which we judge correctly of created things, or creatures, and are taught to use them correctly, and direct them to God, their final end. It shows us that the truths of faith are believable and acceptable, even from the standpoint of reason. Note the distinct difference between Christian and non-Christian knowledge. The former helps us put all things in their proper place in relation to their Maker. Mere knowledge, godless knowledge, is merely a piling up of facts and information, without any order or purpose. With this Christian knowledge St. Francis of Assisi was inspired to write his immortal "Canticle of the Sun," or Praise of all Creatures.

6. Piety is the gift by which we honor God as our Father. Piety is from an old Latin word which means devotion to one's parents. Christian piety is devotion to our heavenly parent. It helps us take pleasure in prayer, spiritual reading and good works, because they please our Father. It helps us have at

heart everything that will honor God.

7. Fear of the Lord is that gift which helps us revere and respect God and dread to offend His Divine Majesty. It is not a slavish, cringing feeling. It is the fear of loving children of a loving Father, who dread to offend Him because He is so good. It diverts us from evil and directs us to good.

How desperately we need these gifts every day. Without them we are sailors tossed about in a storm, not knowing the direction, or, knowing it, not being able to follow it.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are without question great gifts essential for our sanctification and salvation. Each baptized and confirmed Christian should implore the Holy Spirit to inflame in his soul these gifts. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II said, "With gifts and qualities such as these, we are equal to any task and capable of overcoming any difficulties."

May the Holy Spirit pour His powerful gifts into the hearts of every one. May the Holy Spirit guide each one of you. May He guide our leaders and statesmen, our professional people, our parents, our teachers, and our students. May the Divine Dove show us the way and help us to follow it. May the Spirit of God abide with us forever.