

VIRTUES, GIFTS, AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE VIRTUES

The Theological Virtues order us directly and immediately to God as our supernatural end. They have God himself as their material object and one of his divine attributes as their formal object. Since they are strictly supernatural, only God can infuse them into the soul.

Faith is the virtue whereby a person is enabled to believe what God has revealed is true, not because its intrinsic truth is seen with the rational light of reason, but because of the authority of God who reveals it, of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Hope is the virtue that makes a person desire eternal life and gives one the confidence of receiving the grace necessary to reach heaven. The grounds of hope are the omnipotence of God, his goodness, and the fidelity to what he promised.

Charity is the virtue by which a person loves God above all things for his own sake and loves others for God's sake. It is based on divine faith and is not acquired by mere human effort. It can only be conferred by divine grace.

The Moral Virtues dispose us to follow the dictate of reason illumined by faith in relation to the means that lead to the supernatural end. They rightly ordain human acts to the supernatural end. In this way, they are distinguished from the corresponding natural virtues. These are sometimes called the *cardinal virtues*.

Prudence is correct knowledge about things that ought to be done and of things that ought to be avoided. It is the intellectual virtue whereby a human being recognizes in any matter at hand what is good and what is evil, enabling one to devise, choose, and prepare suitable means for the attainment of any purpose or the avoidance of any evil. The prudent person determines and directs his or her conduct in accordance with the judgment of right reason.

Justice is the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due. It is a habitual inclination of the will and therefore always recognizes each one's rights, under any and all circumstances. The rights in question are whatever belongs to a person as an individual who is distinct from the one who practices justice. The just person respects the rights of each and works for the common good.

Fortitude is a steadiness of will in doing good in spite of difficulties faced in the performance of one's duty. There are two levels to the practice of fortitude: one is the suppression of inordinate fear and the other is the curbing of recklessness. The fortitudinous person is able to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions.

Temperance moderates the desire for pleasure and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are seven forms of supernatural initiative conferred with the reception of sanctifying grace. They are in the nature of supernatural reflexes that spontaneously answer to the divine impulses of grace almost without reflection but always with full consent. These gifts perfect the infused virtues.

Wisdom makes the soul responsive to God in the contemplation of divine things, prompting a certain divine penetration of the truths of the Christian faith. Built into wisdom is the element of love, which inspires contemplative reflection on these divine mysteries, rejoices dwelling on them, and directs the mind to judge all things according to their principles. *Wisdom perfects the virtue of love.*

Understanding is for grasping revealed truths easily and profoundly. It gives insight into the meaning of what a person believes in faith. It produces three principal effects in those who possess it. They are enabled to penetrate to the very core of revealed truths, without ever fully understanding their meaning; they are confirmed in their belief by acquiring great certitude in the revealed word of God; and they are brought to the knowledge of a greater number of truths by drawing numerous conclusions from revealed principles. *Understanding perfects the virtue of faith.*

Knowledge gives a person the ability to judge everything from a supernatural viewpoint. The object of this gift is the whole spectrum of created things insofar as they lead one to God. Through infused knowledge the faithful can see the providential purpose of whatever enters their lives, and they are able to put creatures to the right use according to God's will for themselves and for others. It enables those who have the gift to discern easily and effectively between the impulses of temptation and the inspirations of grace. *Knowledge perfects the virtue of faith.*

Fortitude gives a person a special strength of will. It confers an extraordinary readiness to undergo trials for love of God or in fulfillment of the divine will; unusual courage to bear difficulties even for many years; firmness in carrying arduous tasks to their completion; perseverance in a lifetime fidelity to one's vocation in spite of heavy trials or disappointments sent by God; and gladness in being privileged to suffer persecution or humiliation in union with Christ and for the sake of his name. *Fortitude perfects the virtue of fortitude.*

Counsel enables a person to judge promptly and rightly, as by a sort of supernatural intuition, what should be done, especially in difficult situations. With the gift of counsel, the Holy Spirit speaks, as it were, to the heart and in an instant enlightens a person what to do. Enlightened by the Spirit, a person learns what to do in a specific case and what advice to give when consulted or command to make if he is in authority. *Counsel perfects the virtue of prudence.*

Piety produces an instinctive filial affection for God and devotion toward those who are specially consecrated to God. It is ready loyalty to God and the things of God. This gift enables a person to see in God not only one's sovereign Master but a loving Father. It engenders in the soul a filial respect for God, a generous love toward him, and an affectionate obedience that wants to do what he commands because it loves the one who commands. *Piety perfects the virtue of justice.*

Fear of the Lord inspires a person with profound respect for the majesty of God. Its corresponding effects are protection from sin through dread of offending the Lord, and a strong confidence in the power of his help. The fear of the Lord is not servile but filial. Whereas in servile fear the evil dreaded is punishment; in filial fear it is the fear of doing anything contrary to the will of God. The gift of fear comprises three principal elements: a vivid sense of God's greatness, a lively sorrow for the least faults committed, and a vigilant care in avoiding occasions of sin. *Fear of the Lord perfects the virtues of hope and temperance.*

FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are supernatural works that manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit. The one who performs them recognizes God's presence by the happiness he or she experiences; others recognize God's presence by witnessing these good works. We could call them identifiable effects of the Holy Spirit – signs that the Holy Spirit is at work in us. They are:

Charity (God-like love)

Generosity (giving beyond what justice demands)

Joy (deep and stable, withstanding trial and disappointment)

Gentleness (humble before others, considerate of others)

Peace (the sense that all is in place; a tranquility of spirit)

Faithfulness (trust in God, trustworthy in the sight of others)

Patience (long-tempered, ability to withstand trial and disappointment)

Modesty (reverence for body)

Kindness (avoids harshness)

Self-Control (moderation of desires)

Goodness (seeking what is right and best for others)

Chastity (proper sexual expression for one's state in life)