THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_gifts_of_the_Holy_Spirit

The **seven gifts of the Holy Spirit** are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. While some Christans accept these as a definitive list of specific attributes, others understand them merely as examples of the Holy Spirit's work through the faithful. Roman Catholics believe that initiates receive these seven gifts at Baptism, and that they are strengthened at Confirmation so that one can proclaim the truths of the faith.

"The reception of the sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace."[88] For "by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed."[89] (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1285)

List of gifts

The seven gifts are enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3 and conform to the Latin Vulgate[1], which takes the list from the Septuagint [2]. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church[1] and descriptions outlined by St. Thomas Aquinas in the Summa Theologica,[2] the seven gifts are as follows:

- **Wisdom:** Also,the gift of wisdom, we see God at work in our lives and in the world. For the wise person, the wonders of nature, historical events, and the ups and downs of our lives take on deeper meaning. The matters of judgment about the truth, and being able to see the whole image of God. We see God as our Father and other people with dignity. Lastly being able to see God in everyone and everything everywhere.

- **Understanding:** In understanding, we comprehend how we need to live as a follower of Christ. A person with understanding is not confused by all the conflicting messages in our culture about the right way to live. The gift of understanding perfects a person's speculative reason in the apprehension of truth. It is the gift whereby self-evident principles are known, Aquinas writes.[3]

- **Counsel (Right Judgment):** With the gift of counsel/right judgment, we know the difference between right and wrong, and we choose to do what is right. A person with right judgment avoids sin and lives out the values taught by Jesus. The gift of truth that allows the person to respond prudently, and happily to believe our Christ the Lord

- **Fortitude (Courage):** With the gift of fortitude/courage, we overcome our fear and are willing to take risks as a follower of Jesus Christ. A person with courage is willing to stand up for what is right in the sight of God, even if it means accepting rejection, verbal abuse, or even physical harm and death. The gift of courage allows people the firmness of mind that is required both in doing good and in enduring evil, especially with regard to goods or evils that are difficult, just like Joan of Arc did.

- **Knowledge:** With the gift of knowledge, we understand the meaning of God. The gift of knowledge is more than an accumulation of facts.

- **Piety (Reverence):** With the gift of reverence, sometimes called piety, we have a deep sense of respect for God and the church. A person with reverence recognizes our total reliance on God and comes before God with humility, trust, and love. Piety is the gift whereby, at the Holy Spirit's instigation, we pay worship and duty to God as our Father, Aquinas writes.

- **Fear of the Lord (Wonder and Awe):** With the gift of fear of the Lord we are aware of the glory and majesty of God. A person with wonder and awe knows that God is the perfection of all we desire: perfect knowledge, perfect goodness, perfect power, and perfect love. This gift is described by Aquinas as a fear of separating oneself from God. He describes the gift as a "filial fear," like a child's fear of offending his father, rather than a "servile fear," that is, a fear of punishment. Also known as knowing God is all powerful. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 1:7) because it puts our mindset in its correct location with respect to God: we are the finite, dependent creatures, and He is the infinite, all-powerful Creator.

Comparisons and correspondences

St. Thomas Aquinas says that four of these gifts (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel) direct the intellect, while the other three gifts (fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord) direct the will toward God.

In some respects, the gifts are similar to the virtues, but a key distinction is that the virtues operate under the impetus of human reason (prompted by grace), whereas the gifts operate under the impetus of the Holy Spirit; the former can be used when one wishes, but the latter operate only when the Holy Spirit wishes. In the case of Fortitude, the gift has, in Latin and English, the same name as a virtue, which it is related to but from which it must be distinguished.

In Summa Theologica II.II, Thomas Aquinas asserts the following correspondences between the seven Capital Virtues and the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit:[4]

> The gift of wisdom corresponds to the virtue of charity.
> The gift of understanding corresponds to the virtue of faith.
> The gift of counsel (right judgement) corresponds to the virtue of prudence.
> The gift of courage corresponds to the virtue of fortitude.
> The gift of knowledge corresponds to the virtue of hope.
> The gift of Reverance corresponds to the virtue of justice.
> The gift of Wonder and Awe corresponds to the virtue of temperance.

The seven gifts were often represented as doves in medieval texts and especially figure in depictions of the Tree of Jesse which shows the Genealogy of Jesus. In many such depictions the doves encircle a bust of Christ.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE MANIFESTATION OF SANCTIFYING GRACE

By Scott P. Richert

http://catholicism.about.com/od/beliefsteachings/tp/Gifts_of_the_Holy_Spirit.htm

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. They are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ but are found in all Christians who are in a state of grace. We receive them when we are infused with sanctifying grace, the life of God within us—as, for example, when we receive a sacrament worthily. As the current Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, "They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them." Infused with His gifts, we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as if by instinct, the way Christ Himself would.

1. WISDOM

Wisdom is the first and highest gift of the Holy Spirit, because it is the perfection of faith. Through wisdom, we come to value properly those things which we believe through faith. The truths of Christian belief are more important than the things of this world, and wisdom helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly, loving Creation for the sake of God, rather than for its own sake.

The First and Highest Gift of the Holy Spirit:

Wisdom is the perfection of faith. As Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., notes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary, "Where faith is a simple knowledge of the articles of Christian belief, wisdom goes on to a certain divine penetration of the truths themselves." The better we understand those truths, the more we value them properly. Thus wisdom, the Catholic Encyclopedia notes, "by detaching us from the world, makes us relish and love only the things of heaven." Through wisdom, we judge the things of the world in light of the highest end of man—the contemplation of God.

The Application of Wisdom:

Such detachment, however, is not the same as renunciation of the world—far from it. Rather, wisdom helps us to love the world properly, as the creation of God, rather than for its own sake. The material world, though fallen as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, is still worthy of our love; we simply need to see it in the proper light, and wisdom allows us to do so.

Knowing the proper ordering of the material and spiritual worlds through wisdom, we can more easily bear the burdens of this life and respond to our fellow man with charity and patience.

2. UNDERSTANDING

Understanding is the second gift of the Holy Spirit, and people sometimes have a hard time understanding (no pun intended) how it differs from wisdom. While wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, understanding allows us grasp, at least in a limited way, the very essence of the truths of the Catholic Faith. Through understanding, we gain a certitude about our beliefs that moves beyond faith.

The Second Gift of the Holy Spirit:

Understanding is the second gift of the Holy Spirit, behind only wisdom. It differs from wisdom in that wisdom is the desire to contemplate the things of God, while understanding allows us, as Fr. John A. Hardon writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, to "penetrate to the very core of revealed truths." This doesn't mean that we can come to understand, say, the Trinity the way that we might a mathematical equation, but that we become certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. Such certitude moves beyond faith, which "merely assents to what God has revealed."

Understanding in Practice:

Once we become convinced through understanding of the truths of the Faith, we can also draw conclusions from those truths and arrive at a further understanding of man's relation to God and his role in the world. Understanding rises above natural reason, which is concerned only with the things we can sense in the world around us. Thus, understanding is both speculative—concerned with intellectual knowledge—and practical, because it can help us to order the actions of our lives toward our final end, which is God. Through understanding, we see the world and our life within it in the larger context of the eternal law and the relation of our souls to God.

3. COUNSEL

Counsel, the third gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the cardinal virtue of prudence. Prudence can be practiced by anyone, but counsel is supernatural. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we are able to judge how best to act almost by intuition. Because of the gift of counsel, Christians need not fear to stand up for the truths of the Faith, because the Holy Spirit will guide us in defending those truths.

The Third Gift of the Holy Spirit:

Counsel is the third of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enumerated in Isaiah 11:2-3. All seven gifts are present in their fullness in Jesus Christ, Whom Isaiah foretold (Isaiah 11:1), but they are available to all Christians who are in a state of grace. We receive the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit when we are infused with sanctifying grace, the life of God within us—as, for example, when we receive a sacrament worthily. As the current Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, "They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them."

The Perfection of Prudence:

Counsel is the perfection of the cardinal virtue of prudence. While prudence, like all the cardinal virtues, can be practiced by anyone, whether in a state of grace or not, it can take on a supernatural dimension through sanctifying grace. Counsel is the fruit of this supernatural prudence.

Like prudence, counsel allows us to judge rightly what we should do in a particular circumstance. It goes beyond prudence, though, in allowing such judgments to be made promptly, "as by a sort of supernatural intuition," as Fr. John A. Hardon writes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary.

Counsel in Practice:

Counsel builds on both wisdom, which allows us to judge the things of the world in light of our final end, and understanding, which helps us to penetrate to the very core of the mysteries of our faith.

"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," writes Father Hardon. It is the gift that allows us as Christians to be assured that we will act correctly in times of trouble and trial. Through counsel, we can speak without fear in defense of the Christian Faith. Thus, the Catholic Encyclopedia notes, counsel "enables us to see and choose correctly what will help most to the glory of God and our own salvation."

4. FORTITUDE

While counsel is the perfection of a cardinal virtue, fortitude is both a gift of the Holy Spirit and a cardinal virtue. Fortitude is ranked as the fourth gift of the Holy Spirit because it gives us the strength to follow through on the actions suggested by the gift of counsel. While fortitude is sometimes called courage, it goes beyond what we normally think of as courage. Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs that allows them to suffer death rather than to renounce the Christian Faith.

One of the Four Cardinal Virtues:

Fortitude is one of the four cardinal virtues. As such, it can be practiced by anyone, since, unlike the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues are not, in themselves, the gifts of God through grace but the outgrowth of habit.

Fortitude is commonly called courage, but it is different from what much of what we think of as courage today. Fortitude is always reasoned and reasonable; the person exercising fortitude is willing to put himself in danger if necessary, but he does not seek danger for danger's sake.

The Third of the Cardinal Virtues:

St. Thomas Aquinas ranked fortitude as the third of the cardinal virtues, because it serves prudence and justice, the higher virtues. Fortitude is the virtue that allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in our will in the face of obstacles. Prudence and justice are the virtues through which we decide what needs to be done; fortitude gives us the strength to do it.

What Fortitude Is Not:

Fortitude is not foolhardiness or rashness, "rushing in where angels fear to tread." Indeed, part of the virtue of fortitude, as Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., notes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary, is the "curbing of recklessness." Putting our bodies or lives in danger when it is not necessary is not fortitude but foolishness.

A Gift of the Holy Spirit:

Sometimes, however, the ultimate sacrifice is necessary, in order to stand up for what is right and to save our souls. Fortitude is the virtue of the martyrs, who are willing to give their lives rather than to renounce their faith. That sacrifice may be passive—Christian martyrs do not actively seek martyrdom—but it is nonetheless determined and resolute.

It is in martyrdom that we see the best example of fortitude rising above a mere cardinal virtue (able to be practiced by anyone) into a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit. But it also shows itself, as the Catholic Encyclopedia notes, "in moral courage against the evil spirit of the times, against improper fashions, against human respect, against the common tendency to seek at least the comfortable, if not the voluptuous."

Fortitude, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, also allows us to cope with poverty and loss, and to cultivate the Christian virtues that allow us to rise above the basic requirements of Christianity. The saints, in their love for God and their fellow man and their determination to do what is right, exhibit fortitude as a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, and not merely as a cardinal virtue.

5. KNOWLEDGE

The fifth gift of the Holy Spirit, knowledge, is often confused with both wisdom and understanding. Like wisdom, knowledge is the perfection of faith, but whereas wisdom gives us the desire to judge all things according to the truths of the Catholic Faith, knowledge is the actual ability to do so. Like counsel, it is aimed at our actions in this life. In a limited way, knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life the way that God sees them. Through this gift of the Holy Spirit, we can determine God's purpose for our lives and live them accordingly.

The Perfection of Faith:

Like wisdom, knowledge perfects the theological virtue of faith. The aims of knowledge and wisdom are different, however. Whereas wisdom helps us to penetrate divine truth and prepares us to judge all things according to that truth,

knowledge gives us that ability to judge. As Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., writes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary, "The object of this gift is the whole spectrum of created things insofar as they lead one to God."

The Application of Knowledge:

Knowledge allows us to see the circumstances of our life as God sees them, albeit in a more limited way, since we are limited by our human nature. Through the exercise of knowledge, we can ascertain God's purpose in our lives and His reason for placing us in our particular circumstances. As Father Hardon notes, knowledge is sometimes called "the science of the saints," because "it enables those who have the gift to discern easily and effectively between the impulses of temptation and the inspirations of grace." Judging all things in the light of divine truth, we can more easily distinguish between the promptings of God and the subtle wiles of the devil.

6. PIETY

Piety, the sixth gift of the Holy Spirit, is the perfection of the virtue of religion. While we tend to think of religion today as the external elements of our faith, it really means the willingness to worship and to serve God. Piety takes that willingness beyond a sense of duty, so that we desire to worship God and to serve Him out of love, the way that we desire to honor our parents and do what they wish.

The Perfection of Religion:

Perhaps in none of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is this instinctual response more obvious than in piety. While wisdom and knowledge perfect the theological virtue of faith, piety perfects religion, which, as Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., notes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary, is "The moral virtue by which a person is disposed to render to God the worship and service he deserves." Far from being a drudgery, worship should be an act of love, and piety is the instinctive affection for God that makes us desire to render worship to Him, just as we voluntarily honor our parents.

Piety in Practice:

Piety, Father Hardon notes, arises "not so much from a studied effort or acquired habit as from a supernatural communication conferred by the Holy Spirit." People sometimes say that "piety demands it," which usually means that they feel compelled to do something that they don't want to do. But true piety makes no such demands but instills in us a desire always to do that which is pleasing to God (and, by extension, that which is pleasing to those who serve God in their own lives).

7. FEAR OF THE LORD

The seventh and final gift of the Holy Spirit is the fear of the Lord, and perhaps no other gift of the Holy Spirit is so misunderstood. We think of fear and hope as opposites, but the fear of the Lord confirms the theological virtue of hope. This gift of the Holy Spirit gives us the desire not to offend God, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace that we need in order to keep from offending Him. Our desire not to offend God is more than simply a sense of duty; like piety, the fear of the Lord arises out of love.

Confirming the Virtue of Hope:

The gift of the fear of the Lord, Fr. John A. Hardon notes in his Modern Catholic Dictionary, confirms the virtue of hope. We often think of hope and fear as mutually exclusive, but the fear of the Lord is the desire not to offend Him, and the certainty that He will give us the grace necessary to keep from doing so. It is that certainty that gives us hope.

The fear of the Lord is like the respect we have for our parents. We do not wish to offend them, but we also do not live in fear of them, in the sense of being frightened.

What the Fear of the Lord Is Not:

In the same way, Father Hardon notes, "The fear of the Lord is not servile but filial." In other words, it is not a fear of punishment, but a desire not to offend God that parallels our desire not to offend our parents.

Even so, many people misunderstand the fear of the Lord. Recalling the verse that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," they think that the fear of the Lord is something that is good to have when you first start out as a Christian,

but that you should grow beyond it. That is not the case; rather, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it is one of the foundations of our religious life, just as the desire to do what our parents wish us to do should remain with us our entire lives.

CONFIRMATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

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http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/MM/ap0898.asp

At Baptism, we hear of the role of the Holy Spirit in the prayer over the baptismal water:

Father, look now with love on your Church,
and unseal for her the fountain of baptism.
By the power of the Spirit
give to the water of this font
the grace of your Son...
cleanse [those to be baptized] from sin in a new birth of innocence
by water and the Spirit. (Roman Sacramentary)

At Confirmation, we learn the implications of this new life in the Holy Spirit:

All powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by water and the Holy Spirit
you freed your sons and daughters from sin
And gave them new life.
Send your Holy Spirit upon them
to be their helper and guide.
Give them the spirit of [1] wisdom and [2] understanding,
the spirit of [3] right judgment and [4] courage,
the spirit of [5] knowledge and [6] reverence.
Fill them with the spirit of [7] wonder and awe in your presence. (Rite of Confirmation)

This prayer names the traditional "Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit." The biblical origin of these seven gifts is found in Isaiah (11:1-3) where he is foretelling the qualities of the Messiah.

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
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.

[The ancient Greek and Latin translations of this passage read "piety" for "fear of the Lord" in line six; this gives us our traditional seven gifts.]

These seven gifts are the signs that the Messiah will be guided by the Spirit. The relation of these gifts to the sacrament of Confirmation becomes clear when we remember that the word "Messiah" (*Christos* in Greek) means "anointed." Jesus was "anointed," filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism. At Confirmation we are anointed with the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Gospels we see how these seven gifts form Jesus' personality. They are characteristic of his activity. Consider the wisdom expressed in his parables; his understanding of the poor and the sick; his right judgment when tested by the Pharisees; his courage to continue the journey to Jerusalem where he surmised what fate awaited him; his knowledge of God's will; his reverence for his heavenly Father; his awe before the wonders of creation—the lilies of the field, the birds of the air....The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are the manifestation of the Divine Power active in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

In Baptism, our sins are washed away and we come up from the water bath to be clothed in a new garment. Putting on the baptismal garment is a visible symbol of the invisible reality of "putting on Christ." When we are anointed with oil in Confirmation, it is a visible symbol of the invisible reality of being anointed with the Spirit, being "Christ-ed" or "messiah-ed." We put on Christ, and the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit become our gifts. We pray that the qualities of the Messiah take root in us and become our qualities so that we may become signs of God's presence in the world.

At the actual anointing during Confirmation we hear the words: "(Name), be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Here the gift referred to is the Holy Spirit himself. We are sealed with the gift of (that is, the gift which is) the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's "first gift to those who believe" (Eucharistic Prayer IV).