



THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS

In Chapter Eleven in his book of the Bible, the prophet Isaiah lists the seven Gifts of the Spirit for us. They are: wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. But what is their general purpose? Why do we need them?

The Catechism tells us their purpose quite clearly in paragraph #1830: “The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit”. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are the grace necessary to live the life of holiness that we are called to by Christ. It is the practical reality of Philippians 4: 13 where St. Paul states: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. Simply put, the life of sanctity we are called to is nothing we can do on our own natural power. It can only be accomplished through the supernatural power of Christ and His Spirit.

Additionally, the Catechism informs us that the gifts are not transitory, but rather, “are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (CCC #1830). This tells us two things: 1) they become a part of us and 2) they aren’t magic—they just help us to respond to God’s will and direction.

You can look at their importance in another way as well. After the fall of Adam and Eve with the Original Sin, all of us are born with this fallen nature. While baptism gives us new life in Christ, all of us still live with an unhealthy inclination towards sin, which theologians call concupiscence. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to combat this unhealthy urge to sin by making us more open to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It’s precisely because of these gifts that the Church teaches, “the Confirmed are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed” (CCC #1285).

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