

## The Holy Spirit: A Big Help in Difficult Times

One of the things that strikes you during the Easter Season readings is the transformation that the apostles go through. Leaving Jesus to die alone on Good Friday, then hiding in a locked room after He has died, they eventually go out comforted by the peace the resurrected Christ gives them, but then receive the Holy Spirit and leave the locked room to proclaim the Gospel. The New Testament is filled with testaments to their bravery. Despite facing persecution all the time, they are undeterred and it leads many of them to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit helps them carry out their mission.

The same Spirit helps us on our journey too. And during these really challenging times for us all, it's worth thinking about how the Spirit helps us.

As it relates to both the Covid situation but also our lives, let's think of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit.

**Wisdom** helps us to know God more deeply and gives us an understanding of God's ways. With the Holy Spirit, we can spend more time with God but also when we use Wisdom, we can come to learn things more deeply. Closely related is **understanding** which helps us to know our faith better. In life these days we spend a lot of time yelling but with these gifts we can know things more deeply, while at the same time be better prepared to meet people where they are at rather than shout at them.

**Counsel** gives us the ability to come to a deeper understanding of our faith and receive guidance from God and one another, and to help others. When making big decisions in our life, a prudent person gets advice from others, does research, and then ultimately makes a decision. **Knowledge**, closely related to it, helps us to know God, ourselves and one another.

**Fortitude** is courage; it's what helps us not be overcome by fear, but to do challenging things. Whether it's ruminating about the risks of the virus, fearing rejection, or fearing saying something challenging to a loved one, we all face tough situations - but God helps us to face them.

**Piety and Fear of the Lord** help us to keep God as our priority. We do not "fear" God in the sense that we think He's out to get us if we mess up. Rather the "fear" is fearing that we would turn from Him and disappoint him by making a sinful action. With piety rather than get caught up in the other things in life that keep us busy but distract us from God.

**Charity** helps us to truly love one another by meeting their needs. It's what causes people to do a car parade at a nursing home, to leave colored rocks on a trail encouraging people to be kind, or to call someone up and have a conversation. Charity helps us to remember it's not just about ourselves, but about helping one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Joy** is when we realize we live for God. Think of Mother Teresa; many photos show her smiling despite the daily challenges she faced of helping the poor, and struggling with spiritual battles. When we have joy we believe we will be with God someday in heaven, but we bring that joy into the world by being people who are happy and who draw others to Jesus.

**Peace** helps give us order in our lives and prevents angst from taking over. It's the first word Jesus says to the apostles when He meets them in the locked room. When we have peace we can trust that God will see us safely through our journeys.

**Patience** is what helps us remember God has a plan and is in control. How patient Jesus throughout His life; patiently growing up with Mary and Joseph and waiting to start His mission; patient with the apostles; patient in not putting His will ahead of the Father's. Sometimes we want instant gratification or answers, but with patience, we can be reminded that things will work out in the end because God is with us.

**Benignity** as a gift of the Spirit is related to charity, inspiring us to be kind towards others.

**Goodness** is where we renounce evil. With goodness as a gift, we can strive to become better and look at our lives and say what are my sins and strive go grow in holiness.

**Long-suffering** is related to patience in that we suffer in life but see it as part of the bigger picture; from the suffering a parent endures in sacrificing so much for a child to the suffering of working hard and making sacrifices for the family. It's what helps us to see the big picture.

**Humility** helps us to remember the world does not revolve around us. It enables us to ask for help from God and one another, and to admit when we may be wrong.

**Temperance** is a gift of the Spirit that helps us not over-indulge in things. We should enjoy things like food, downtime, leisure, or drink and other things, but sometimes they can get out of control. Related to this is the gift of **chastity** from the Spirit that helps us limit our physical desires and respect the entire body and soul.

Each of these gifts and fruits are tools God gives us to help us through life. Making use of them right now helps us in these difficult times to think of others, to show empathy, to trust in God seeing us through, and to try to be patient when we disagree. Pentecost reminds us we are truly not alone, but connected to God and one another.

I'd also like to congratulate our class of 2020 here at Saint Joseph's who have been learning how to live out these fruits and gifts over their time at our school. As the school year comes to an end, we'll have a private Mass for the graduates and their families on Sunday afternoon. I'd like to thank them for their dedication and hard work, and also thank Kelly Roche, our principal, and Mr. Terry Hale, our 8th grade teacher and all of our faculty at the school for their incredible hard work. The Holy Spirit has helped them

in their vocation and because of their dedication, so many of our students lives are impacted for the better as they have been helped on their journey in discerning their vocation in life, but also to sainthood. Thank you, teachers!

Have a blessed Pentecost, and as we still deal with trying to find our way through this tough time, let us never forget God does not leave us alone, but sends us the Spirit to be our light along the way.

God bless,

Fr. Paul