

Docility to the Holy Ghost and the Discerning of Spirits

The sevenfold gifts help us to receive the inspirations of the Holy Ghost with promptness and docility. They are infused and permanent habits.³¹⁷

In the virtues, like religion, we more or less move ourselves, for example, to go to Mass. But by the gifts, we are more or less moved by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for example, in the course of study, to pray in order to receive light. In virtues, we are more active, and in the gifts, we are more passive.

What are the seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost?³¹⁸

1. Gift of Fear: is superior to a servile fear which *diminishes* with charity. It is a filial fear which *increases* with charity. When a soul leaves off sin and is converted to God, this is the first manifestation of the gifts.

2. Piety: the next level gives one a more filial attitude toward God. Piety helps us not be attached to sensible consolations. By this gift, we have a supernatural sweetness even in suffering. This gives the soul the prayer of the quiet.

3. Knowledge: helps us to know what is evil. It shows the vanity of the passing things of the world. It “renders us docile to the inspirations superior to human knowledge and even reason and theology.”³¹⁹ It helps us to weep for our sins.

4. Fortitude: helps us to war against the flesh. Knowing good and evil is not sufficient. Fortitude gives strength to do good and avoid evil. It strengthens our courage and preserves us in holy enthusiasm.

5. Counsel: “supplies for the imperfection of the virtue of prudence.” It allows the Holy Ghost to move us to seek counsel from superiors, confessors, or directors and fortify us against impulsiveness and pusillanimity.³²⁰

6. Understanding: supplies for the imperfections of faith. It is an interior light that helps us penetrate the mysteries received more from sermons or holy readings and not get seduced by the maxims of the world. “The gift of understanding cannot exist in a high degree without great purity of heart.”³²¹

7. Wisdom: helps us to judge all things as God sees them. The downfall of too much learning without understanding makes one scandalized by the cross. But wisdom gives the soul charity to judge all things in relation to God. It enables the saints to accept Providence with a gaze entirely penetrated with love.³²² With this gift, some are able to bring peace to the discouraged. “This is one of the signs of the unitive life.”³²³

What conditions are required for docility to the Holy Ghost? Silence and having a constant conversation with God instead of being preoccupied with the self, the devil, or the world are first required. The attractions toward renunciation of evil and toward interior prayer are more precious than we think.³²⁴

What acts can we do to prepare for docility to the Holy Ghost? First, obey the will of God. Second, frequently renew our resolution to follow the will of God in everything. Third, ask for the light from the Holy Ghost to do the will of God. Fourth, make a consecration to the Holy Ghost.

Our age is wonderfully one of total consecrations to:

1. the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
2. the Holy Ghost,
3. the Blessed Virgin Mary's Immaculate Heart,
4. Saint Joseph's Most Pure Heart, and
5. the Holy Face of Jesus. The first four lead souls in a mysterious way to the Holy Trinity, the Divinity. The Holy Face of Jesus is also a pathway to the Divinity. Thus, consecration to the Holy Face of Jesus is the fruit of true devotion to the preceding consecrations. Saint Joseph's and Mary's influence lead us to the humanity of Jesus, who leads us to the Holy Ghost, who introduces us to the mystery of the adorable Trinity. After these five consecrations, the soul is better equipped to enter deeply into the interior life.³²⁵

What are the fruits of docility to the Holy Ghost? It is one thing to have exterior acts of virtue, but it is another, more perfect way to follow one's interior action, governed by the Holy Ghost, who ought to direct our powers and senses. The Holy Ghost is a Paraclete and Comforter and consoles us in our exile on earth while we are far from God. Saint John of the Cross speaks of this interior life of docility as a cellar. The last and inmost cellar, the spiritual marriage, is entered by few in this world.³²⁶

How does one discern the spirits? Elijah did not hear God in the whirlwind but in the gentle whisper. Interior silence and habitual recollection are required to hear the voice of God. Discernment of spirits is extraordinary or ordinary. The subject at hand deals with ordinary discernment and is a wise discretion of those who faithfully practice prudence and the higher help of the gift of counsel. The three types of spirits are the world, the devil, and God. One of these spirits is typically dominant in the soul:

1. The devil is dominant in the perverse soul.
2. The natural spirit is dominant in the tepid.
3. God is dominant in those who are beginning to give themselves seriously in the spiritual life.³²⁷

The world and the devil constantly interfere with souls; thus, a soul cannot be judged by one or two incidents but by his whole life. One can tell what spirit reigns in the soul by determining whether there is good or bad fruit.

What are the signs of the spirit of nature? It is the enemy of mortification. It disregards faith, hope, and love. It quits the interior life at the moment difficulties arrive. It mistakes charity with philanthropy. It has an egoism that cares not about the glory due to God in right worship and has disregard for the salvation of souls. Here, mediocrity passes for virtue.

What is the spirit of the devil? It is one of pride that quickly switches back and forth from presumption to discouragement. The devil tempts souls to imitate him who fell through pride. It promotes an exterior mortification that eventually ruins one's health because it fuels pride. It

makes the soul practice false humility as it speaks ill of oneself to hinder others speaking ill about him on another point.³²⁸ The devil fashioned self-love instead of charity.

What are the signs of the spirit of God? God helps souls live the Gospel “while remaining faithful to tradition and fleeing novelties.”³²⁹ Exterior mortifications are done under obedience not to the attraction of others, and not to the point of ruining one’s health. “It quickens hope and preserves us from presumption. It makes us ardently desire the living waters of prayer ... by humility, renunciation, and the cross. It gives us a holy indifference with regards to human success.”³³⁰

The spirit of God gives us peace with neighbor, a joy the world cannot take, and a forgetfulness of self. The Holy Ghost takes up His abode in these fervent souls as a Guest and gives inspirations to them “to make them taste certain words of the Gospel.”³³¹ Lastly, there “are harmonized humility and zeal, fortitude and meekness, the simplicity of the dove and the prudence of the serpent.”³³²

Now, turn to the prayers to be recited during the *illuminative way*.¹

¹ Lawrence Daniel Carney III, [*Preparation for Total Consecration to the Holy Face of Jesus: How God Draws the Soul into the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive Ways*](#) (TAN Books, 2024).