



The gifts of the Holy Spirit (2/7):

The gift of piety

“The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God.” (Rom 8:16)

The gift of piety leads us to adhere to God with filial love, not wanting to offend Him in any way.

The spirit of piety touches and enlivens our spiritual life with a new, mild and gentle radiance. Under its influence, our relationship with God and with our neighbour will reach a new level of love. Piety wants to conquer the heart of God, whom it recognises as the most loving Father.

Therefore, it is not content with avoiding everything that could affect even in the slightest way the relationship with Him (which is the effect of the gift of fear); it goes further, wanting to please the Lord in all things. The man moved by the spirit of piety seeks to live as a true child of God. In this way, even the hardest and heaviest obligations can become easy and sweet. In this context, it is worth remembering a phrase of the venerable Anne de Guigné (who died in the odour of sanctity when she was only 11 years old): "Nothing is difficult if one loves God".

Waking up in the morning, while thanking God for the new day that is beginning, the spirit of piety raises its eyes and asks: What can I do for you today, beloved Father? How can I be a source of joy for you today?

The gift of piety wants to mould our heart in such a way that it is mild and gentle. However, it encounters obstacles here, for even though we already strive to be meek, we do not always succeed in being meek, especially when we are confronted with adverse circumstances. That is when it becomes clear to us that we cannot attain this virtue in our own strength.

Then the Holy Spirit comes to our aid and instils in us the gift of piety, to melt the hardness of our heart. He takes our heart in His hands and moulds it after His own: "Lord, make my heart like unto Thine".

That lightness which characterises the spirit of piety comes from the love of God and neighbour. It is that which helps us to do the Will of God gladly, entirely and immediately, just as we may suppose the holy angels do.

Under the influence of this gift, it becomes ever clearer to us that God is the Father of all men. Thus, piety permeates our whole life and, like the fear of God, also affects the way we treat our neighbour. It makes us more loving and gentler, for it helps us to smooth out all harshness and roughness towards our neighbour, especially towards those who displease us or are hostile to us.

We should insistently ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the gift of piety, and learn to be attentive to His most subtle guidance, for under the influence of the spirit of piety our heart will be widened and we will acquire the attitude of children.

Precisely at times when we feel dryness and coldness within us, we must not allow ourselves to be confused. Even if we do not have palpable feelings of devotion, it is our faithfulness and constancy in prayer that will attract the gift of piety.

With it, we will deepen the path of transformation we have embarked on. We will allow the Holy Spirit to exert His influence on us more and more, and, thanks to the spirit of piety, our path of discipleship will become more agile and our witness more attractive.

In this way, we will get rid of a certain rigidity and inflexibility that can mark our life of faith, without, however, falling into the opposite extreme of lightness and superficiality.