

January 17, 2016

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

To each person, the Manifestation of the Spirit is given for the Common Good

You mean, the gifts of the Spirit aren't given to me for my benefit alone?

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Some of the English words for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit including the following:

- † *Wisdom*
- † *Understanding*
- † *Counsel* (right judgment)
- † *Fortitude* (courage)
- † *Knowledge*
- † *Piety* (reverence)
- † *Fear of the Lord* (wonder and awe)

It is easy to think of these gifts as given primarily for our own personal spiritual benefit, such as “*trying to remain faithful in worshipping God*” - “*trying to make wise moral choices*” - “*trying to keep faith in the face of doubt.*” And these are good - trying to be a faithful disciple of Jesus. But the Gifts of Spirit aren't given just for our sake, they are also given for the sake of others - the Common Good. Jesus was clear about this. He wasn't just concerned about how we care for ourselves, he was concerned about how we care for each other. The Gifts of Spirit lead us into the other's chaos.

The manifestation of the Spirit is described in terms of Seven Gifts, which is a good teaching technique as they parallel the Seven Capital Sins. It is good to remember, however, that these are not seven separate and distinct gifts. They simply describe seven different ways of experiencing God's Spirit in our lives. The Gifts of the Spirit is God's Spirit Himself.

How the Spirit is described as seven gifts

Last Sunday, we considered how mercy enters into the chaos of another. In this, God's Spirit is manifest in seven ways:

- † *UNDERSTANDING*, as in the parishioners of Holy Child Jesus Church community in Queens, New York, who adopted a mother's newborn which she had abandoned in the church's manger ... and in the mother who left her son in a place where she knew he could be found.

- † *WISDOM*, as in the preschool established in a nursing home in Seattle in which children and the elderly interact with each other.

- † *FORTITUDE AND COURAGE*, as in the mother who sleeps on the floor of her three-year-old son's room at 2 a.m. because he thinks there are monsters in there ... and in the little boy to lead him to cry out when in fear.

- † *COUNSEL (RIGHT JUDGMENT)*, as in Oakland Athletics pitcher Sean Doolittle and girlfriend who partnered with Chicago city government officials to organize Thanksgiving dinner for the cities 17 families of Syrian refugees ... and in the refugees in coming to the US for sanctuary.

- † *PIETY (REVERENCE)*, as in the person returning to the sacrament of reconciliation after decades, nervous as can be and embarrassed to have forgotten the Act of Contrition ... and in the confessor who responds with warmth, gentleness and bit of good humor.

- † *FEAR (WONDER AND AWE) OF THE LORD*, as in the scores of Parisians who on the night of the terror attacks opened their homes to anyone who needed shelter ... and in the people who trusted there had to be a safe haven somewhere in the middle of attack.

- † *KNOWLEDGE*, as in Rosa's Fresh Pizza in Philadelphia where a dollar Post-It would buy a slice of pizza ... and in the homeless who knew that there are ministers on the streets.

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Sometimes it helps to see what something looks like by seeing what it doesn't look like.

- † The Spirit is not manifest when we make political choices that benefit only ourselves ... or in ourselves when we ridicule and condemn those who make such choices. The Spirit is manifest in neither.

- † The Spirit is not manifest when we seek lives of comfort and ease with no regard for those who lack basic necessities of life ... or in ourselves when we condemn those who make such choices. The Spirit is manifest in neither.

† The Spirit is not manifest when we choose to exclude those who look different from us, who speak differently than us, who pray differently from us ... or in ourselves when we condemn those who make such choices.

God's Spirit is not in us when we are indifferent to the well-being of others, to the common good, no matter how often we walk down the church aisle or receive the Eucharist. Jesus called praying fervently while ignoring the needs of others - hypocrisy.

This is the Year of Mercy

It is not enough simply to give lip service to a life of mercy-giving. We need to feel it happening. St. Mary is planning a series of programs and events to help us do just that.

† One is to choose a theme-a-month for our homilies and bulletin inserts to highlight some aspect of Mercy.

† Another is to offer spiritual events throughout the year, such as retreats; Gospel pageants; workshops about our faith; prayer experiences such as the rosary, adoration, and prayer vigils; fasting from whatever has an emotional hold on us; parish events like a walk-the-beach clean-up. If any of you would like to see something else offered to highlight this Year of Mercy, please let us know. There will be announcements of each program for each month.

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This is the YEAR OF MERCY

Holy Spirit can't wait to get going in us. So hang on, because:

*"Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely
in a pretty and well-preserved body, but to skid in broadside,
thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and proclaiming,
'WOW, What a Ride!'"*