

A background image of yellow flowers, possibly sunflowers, with a soft, blurred effect. The flowers are in the foreground and background, creating a sense of depth. The overall tone is warm and natural.

Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Four: Counsel



Today's Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3 Colossians 3:12-17

I find dictionaries amusing. They're useful of course, but our language often seems contradictory. If you look up "counsel" as I did online here, all the main definitions are true to what I understood the word to mean. However, you'll notice that, apparently, it is "obsolete" to associate counsel with wisdom and prudence. I find that interesting considering that the first four definitions (in my opinion) would be a horrible example of counsel unless they contained wisdom and prudence.

But I digress... The important thing to know is that regardless of whether or not modern dictionaries consider this particular definition obsolete, it is actually quite true to what the Church means when she speaks of the gift of counsel. When we get carried away in selfishness, leave our emotions and thoughts unchecked, and insist on our own narrow perspectives of how things should work, we do not exhibit the gift of counsel.

Pope Francis tells us that the gift of counsel helps us to make decisions in our lives after the example of Jesus, teaching us to overcome our self-centered nature and act according to his will. Colossians 3:12-17 is one of my favorite passages. While I love when Jesus speaks powerful words that never seem to lack richness (e.g. "Love your neighbor as yourself"), I also love when St. Paul breaks out his teachings into concrete, specific examples of how to live it out. This passage in Colossians is one of those examples for me, and I feel as though he is calling the Colossians to live

according to this gift of counsel. His words are a challenge for me every time I read them, but I know they call me to a holier, more loving life.

We are called to ask God His will and live it out in our daily lives. As you read through this passage in Colossians, what sticks out to you the most? Is there one specific part that you have the hardest time accepting or desiring to live out? How do you feel the gift of counsel will help you overcome that weakness?

Sisters, we are never alone in our battles. Feel free to share in the comments the areas that are hardest for you to apply wisdom and prudence – or the gift of counsel – so we can know we're in this together. Let's ask the Holy Spirit for this gift and remember each other in prayer as we strive to support one another and become more docile to His Will.

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Pope Francis' teaching:

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-gift-of-counsel-illuminates-the-will-of-god/>

- Emma



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Five: Fortitude

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Today's Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3, Philippians 4:13 ,
2Corinthians 4:16-18 ,Romans 5:3-5

Several years ago, I finally became fed up with an unhealthy habit of mine. I felt so weak and powerless against it, but I had finally had enough. In an act of desperation and low self-esteem, I silently cried out to God, "PLEASE God help me! I can't do this. I'm so helpless on my own."

Then I realized something. That's exactly what God was waiting for me to do. If I cannot even breathe without God's sustaining grace, why should I expect to overcome any difficulty or habitual sin without His grace? And if I can't overcome them without that grace, why not specifically ask for it? From that day forward, my prayer changed. My disposition changed. I realized my helplessness and weakness when I tried to do everything on my own, and I specifically invited Christ to give me the grace to overcome temptation and sin. And guess what? It worked.

Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things in [Christ] who strengthens me."

Notice that it does not say, "I can do all things by my own strength so God is proud of me." So why is it that there are some things we accept as needing God's divine providence, but when it comes to our attachments and sins and resentments and fears we seem to forget this verse? The gift of fortitude is that gift which allows us to face extraordinary situations, harsh and painful experiences, and obstacles that keep us from a deeper relationship with God. Pope Francis says:

"Dear friends, sometimes we may be tempted to allow ourselves be overtaken by laziness or dependency, especially when faced with the hardships and trials of life. In these cases, do not

lose heart, but invoke the Holy Spirit, so that with the gift of fortitude He can lift our hearts and communicate new vigor and enthusiasm to our lives and our following Jesus."

Do not lose heart! In 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 and Romans 5:3–5 we find encouragement to keep fighting the good fight. Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of fortitude. What is it in your life right now that you are trying to do on your own? Have you invited God in to be your strength? Have you welcomed him into those parts of your heart with true humility?

I challenge you to find at least one thing every day that you can pray with St. Paul in Philippians 4:13.

For example:

"I can wake up to my alarm right away through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can speak more lovingly to my family through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can live a chaste life through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can choose to eat healthy right now through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can choose to eat right now through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can study for my exam through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can desire holiness through Christ who strengthens me."

"I can love God more than sex/alcohol/porn/attention/straight A's/etc. through Christ who strengthens me."

Do not lose heart.

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Pope Francis' teaching:

<http://www.catholic.org/news/international/europe/story.php?id=55408>

- Emma

A background image of a field of sunflowers under a soft, hazy sky. The sunflowers are in various stages of bloom, with bright yellow petals and dark brown centers. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Six: Knowledge



Today's Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3

I've come to believe that to know someone is to love them. Some may say that there are definitely people whom they no longer love after getting to know them, and I can understand and respect that. Deceitful people do exist in this world, and I've had my fair share of similar experiences. For me, however, the most common scenario is that I grow in a deeper love for the other person as a sister, a brother, a fellow human, when I truly get to know them.

One summer I ended up in a situation living with a young woman who was toward the bottom on my list of desirable roommates. I generally had a difficult time around her because she was very sarcastic, negative, condescending towards others, and quite arrogant. I tried to be positive and optimistic in the weeks leading up

to her entrance into our house, but I have to be honest – it was pretty forced.

Thankfully, some of the other associated friends of hers weren't going to be around (we all know how the mob mentality works). Needless to say, I had a few difficult moments during that month. But something else happened as well. I actually got to know her. Now, don't get me wrong. I knew her before. I just didn't know her. I had never had the opportunity to learn that we both absolutely love spicy foods. I didn't know that she knew how to make the most heavenly homemade buffalo chicken dip. I didn't know that she was actually the most generous person I had met, and that I would end up hardly lifting a finger or spending a dime when we hung out. I didn't know that she was hilarious when she wasn't being negative

and sarcastic, or that she hated the subject of history.

I didn't know that our patio table actually did make more sense on the back porch until she just decided to move it herself, even though it was sitting on the front porch for at least five years. I didn't expect that, of all my friends I've lived with, I would have an impromptu 90's pop dance party with her. I didn't know that she had been emotionally and romantically strung along by a guy who definitely should have known better. I didn't know that same guy was still trying to manipulate her. I didn't know the reasons behind her return to past habits and sins, and I definitely didn't know that she would end up sharing them with me.

Did we become best friends? No. Did it excuse hurtful things she has said or done? Of course not. But I can say that I got to know her a little bit more than before, and for that I definitely learned to love her as a sister, as another young woman trying to find her way in this crazy world. I think it's safe to say I learned to love her for the same reasons God loves me – for being imperfect, broken, and lost and still seeking Him anyway.

I share this because I know I'm not the only one who has this kind of story. Each one of us has people in our lives who fit some variation of this example, but sometimes it's just a hard struggle to see God's plan. Why do certain people act like they do? Why are they part of my life? Thankfully, this is where the gift of knowledge comes in.

Pope Francis tells us the following:

"[The gift of knowledge] enlightens our human perspective and helps us to see God in the whole of creation. [It] puts us in tune

with God's gaze on things and on people...Through this spiritual gift, we are enabled to see every person, and the world around us, in the light of God's loving plan."

The great news here is that we can ask the Holy Spirit for this gift – to help us see things better in light of His love! All God's creation – nature and humanity – is full of a beauty that points towards God. We did not create it and are not fully in control of it; therefore, we do not have the right to look upon anything or anyone with disrespect. In short, this gift of knowledge helps us to see others as gifts and to perceive God's love in the world.

Is there a person in your life with whom you have a hard time loving? What is blocking the way? What do you think God's plan might be for you and this person? Are you able to see the beauty in all of God's creation, regardless of your environment, neighborhood, house, etc.?

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Pope Francis' teaching:

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/gift-of-knowledge-attunes-us-to-vision-of-god-pope-says/>

- Emma



Gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT

Day Seven: Piety



Today's Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3

I think piety has gotten a bad rap these days. Society has a certain aversive reaction to people who devoutly choose to act differently than the rest of the world. It makes it difficult for others to be courageous and imitate piety themselves, even if they are attracted to it internally.

For me, I honestly just dislike vulnerable moments. Unfortunately, that's about 98% of what happens in life, so I personally live in a state of constant decision – to be vulnerable or not to be! (There is only slight exaggeration here...) But have you ever experienced that moment in which you're terrified to make the sign of the cross in a restaurant and say grace before your meal? To initiate prayer with your family? To ask someone if they want prayer? To stay a few minutes after Mass to pray privately? To switch the radio station when you're driving with your friends?

Personally, I found these things much harder when I was first building a relationship with Jesus. I can't say that there was some life-changing moment in which I suddenly had a great relationship with God, but I do remember gradually not caring what others thought. I think God was slowly working in me, gently bringing me closer to Him until the foundation was so strong that I couldn't deny that part of my life.

This often happens in our human relationships too, right? Sometimes we don't tell a whole lot of people that we started dating someone. Maybe it's only been a couple dates, and what if it

doesn't work out? Why would I want everyone to know? Eventually we grow with the other person, grow in friendship and love, and become more comfortable with this new part of our life.

According to Pope Francis,

"It is this loving relationship which grounds and perfects our authentic worship of God. It's synonymous for friendship with God; that friendship into which Jesus introduces us, and that changes our lives and fills our souls with joy and peace."

This is the gift of piety – the authentic love and worship of God that fills us with joy and peace. Why would we not want to be filled with the One who gives us joy and peace? It's no wonder we see the lady in church spending every moment she can with the Lord, or the mother praying with her children before bed. It's also no wonder why this often makes society so uncomfortable – there is a peacefulness, simplicity, and trustworthiness that we are just not used to in the world.

It beckons us to recognize that something greater does exist which is worthy of our affection. And sometimes we are forced to admit – even if just for a moment – that we may not be seeking the most important things in life.

So let us ask the Holy Spirit for this gift also. Ask him to fill our entire hearts – even the darkest places we don't let others see – and to bring light, joy, and courage.

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart, that I may see the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my mind that I may know the things that are of God.

Come Holy Spirit, into my soul, that I may belong only to God.

Sanctify all that I think, say, and do, that all may be for the glory of God.

Pope Francis' teaching:

<http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/gift-of-piety-fosters-fraternal-solidarity-pope-observes/>

- Emma