

Who was holier than Joseph? Who was purer than the Most Holy Virgin? And yet he [St. Joseph] wanted to leave her secretly. But how prudently and righteously he wanted to do it! He did not want to separate from her openly, lest she be defamed, but clandestinely, that she may preserve her good name. You ought to learn from this holy and just man: although the deeds of others may seem evil to you and are said to be imperfect, you should judge them secretly, not openly, and judge in such a way that neither your conscience nor their good name be hurt. If you do so, you will not be lacking the light, so that you may judge rightly, as the righteous husband of the Most Holy Virgin did not lack light for comprehending the truth about how she had conceived.¹⁵

— St. Stanislaus Papczyński

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

There is a general rule concerning all special graces granted to any human being. Whenever the divine favor chooses someone to receive a special grace, or to accept a lofty vocation, God adorns the person chosen with all the gifts of the Spirit needed to fulfill the task at hand. This general rule is especially verified in the case of St. Joseph.¹

— St. Bernardine of Siena

Saint Joseph had the loftiest of **vocations**, the greatest of missions. He was called to be the spouse of **the Virgin Mary** and the father of **Jesus Christ**. His mission required all seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, fear of the Lord, and wisdom).

Consider that the Holy Spirit chose only Joseph to be the protector of the Blessed Virgin, to be her true husband and consequently, no created being can equal the glory of this great saint.²

— Blessed William Joseph Chaminade

Saint Joseph was not only chosen to be the protector of Mary, but also the protector of Jesus — and you! Jesus and Mary are in heaven, but you are not. This means that St. Joseph's mission is ongoing. From heaven, he watches over those entrusted to his loving care and asks the Holy Spirit to pour out gifts on his children.

You have a mission: to become holy, loving God truly and your neighbor mercifully. You need the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in your life. They will help you resemble your spiritual father and reach heaven.

What specifically do the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit do for us though? Well, the Holy Spirit Fathers provide the answer for us. The Holy Spirit Fathers (also called Spiritans) are the religious community responsible for promulgating throughout the world a very powerful novena to the Holy Spirit that contains an excellent summary of what the gifts are and what they do for us. Reprinted with the permission of the Holy Spirit Fathers, listed below are the descriptions of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit from the novena, as well as a beautiful prayer:

The Gift of Knowledge enables the soul to evaluate created things at their worth — in their relation to God. Knowledge unmask the pretense of creatures, reveals their emptiness, and points out their only true purpose as instruments in the service of God. It shows us the loving care of God even in adversity, and directs us to glorify him in every circumstance of life. Guided by its light, we put first things first, and prize the friendship of God beyond all else.

The Gift of Understanding helps us to grasp the meaning of the truths of our holy religion. By faith we know them, but by understanding we learn to appreciate and relish them. It enables us to penetrate the inner meaning of revealed truths and, through them, to be quickened to newness of life. Our faith ceases to be sterile and inactive, but inspires a mode of life that bears eloquent testimony to the faith that is in us.

The Gift of Counsel endows the soul with supernatural prudence, enabling it to judge promptly and rightly what must be done, especially in difficult circumstances. Counsel applies the principles furnished by knowledge and understanding to the innumerable concrete cases that confront us in the course of our daily duty as parents, teachers, public servants, and Christian citizens. Counsel is supernatural common sense, a priceless treasure in the quest of salvation.

The Gift of Fortitude strengthens the soul against natural fear and supports us in the performance of duty. Fortitude imparts to the will an impulse and energy which move it to undertake without hesitancy the most arduous tasks, to face dangers, to trample underfoot human respect, and to endure without complaint the slow martyrdom of even lifelong tribulation.

The Gift of Piety begets in our hearts a filial affection for God as our most loving Father. It inspires us to love and respect for his sake persons and things consecrated to him, as well as those who are vested with his authority, his mother, St. Joseph, the saints, the Church and its visible head, our parents and superiors, our country and its rulers. He who is filled with the Gift of Piety finds the practice of his religion, not a burdensome duty, but a delightful service.

The Gift of Fear fills us with a sovereign respect for God, and makes us dread nothing so much as to offend him by sin. It is a fear that arises, not from the thought of hell, but from sentiments of reverence and filial submission to our heavenly Father. It is the fear that is the beginning of wisdom, detaching us from worldly pleasures that could in any way separate us from God.

The Gift of Wisdom embodies all the other gifts, as charity embraces all the other virtues. Wisdom is the most perfect of the gifts. Of wisdom it is written "all good things came to me with her, and innumerable riches through her hands." It is the Gift of Wisdom that strengthens our faith, fortifies hope, perfects charity, and promotes the practice of virtue in the highest degree. Wisdom enlightens the mind to discern and relish things divine, in the appreciation of which earthly joys lose their savor, while the Cross of Christ yields a divine sweetness.

Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

O Lord Jesus Christ, who, before ascending into heaven, did promise to send the Holy Spirit to finish your work in the souls of your apostles and disciples, deign to grant the same Holy Spirit to me that he may perfect in my soul, the work of your grace and your love. Grant me the Spirit of Wisdom that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal; the Spirit of Understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of your divine truth; the Spirit of Counsel that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining heaven; the Spirit of Fortitude that I may bear my cross with you and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation; the Spirit of Knowledge that I may know God and know myself and grow perfect in the science of the saints; the Spirit of Piety that I may find the service of God sweet and amiable; and the Spirit of Fear that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to displease him. Mark me, dear Lord, with the sign of your true disciples and animate me in all things with your Spirit. Amen.