

Devotions to the
Holy Spirit



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The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

The Christian's "spiritual life" is precisely that—"spiritual"; that is to say, a life lived in the Spirit, who has made his home in us (Rom 8:9). It is this Holy Spirit, living in us and in whom we live, who enables us to call God our Father (cf. Rom 8:15), to proclaim "Jesus is Lord" (cf. 1 Cor 12:3), to put an end to the misdeeds of the body (cf. Rom 8:13). It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand the wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:10), who supports us in our weakness and who, when we do not know what to say, himself prays for us (cf. Rom 8:26).

All of us have been washed in the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:11) and given to drink of the one Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:13). We are all one body in Christ. It is through the working of the Holy Spirit that, from age to age, the Father gathers us to himself in Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of fellowship; the one Soul animating the one Body of Christ, which is the Church.

Led by the Spirit

Christ our Lord, the Son of God, was, as man, led by the Spirit of God. It was by the Spirit that he was led into the wilderness to be put to the test (cf. Mt 4:1); that he cast out the powers of evil (cf. Mt 12:28); that he spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth (cf. Lk 4:14-18); that he chose his apostles (cf. Acts 1:2).

What is true of the Son of God is true also of all the children of God. They who are children of God, says St. Paul, are led by the Spirit of God (cf. Rom 8:14). By these words we are taught two things:

a) That we, who have been adopted by God as his children, have the *right* to call upon the Holy Spirit to come to us, to lead us, to enlighten us, to teach us, and to love us;

b) that, being children of God, we have the *duty* to show in our lives visible signs that the Holy Spirit is our Guide.

When we claim our right to the help of the Holy Spirit, we are asking, in scriptural terms, for the "Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit." We are asking for *Wisdom*—for that wisdom of God which shows mere human wisdom to be folly (cf. 1 Cor 1:19-31); *Understanding*—that is, spiritual insight which

guards us against spiritual shallowness; *Counsel*—which is a maturity of judgment guarding us against imprudent action or judgment; *Knowledge* of the things of God and his ways with men; *Fortitude*—the kind of courage which "bears all things, hopes all things, sustains all things"; *Piety*—that deep sense of reverence for God in all his wonder; and *Fear of the Lord*—the fear one has who is deeply in love and greatly loved, and fears to do anything that will diminish that love in any way (cf. Is 11:1-5).

"By their fruits you will know them," says our Lord. When we try to be and to live as children of God, we are in fact trying to make our lives full of the "fruits of the Holy Spirit." These "fruits" are the visible evidence of the invisible indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us.

And the greatest of these is *love*.

The Spirit of Love

"Unless the Holy Spirit," writes St. Augustine, "were so given to each one of us as to make each of us one who loves both God and neighbor, no one could be transferred from the left hand of God to the right. The reason why the Spirit is rightly called the 'Gift' is simply love. Love, then,

which is of God, and is God, is properly the Holy Spirit—through whom the love of God is poured out into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5); and through that love the whole Trinity dwells in us. Rightly then is the Holy Spirit, who is God, also called the Gift of God."

Charity, then, love of God and of our neighbor, is the most excellent fruit of the Holy Spirit's indwelling; and the way of love is the more excellent way (cf. 1 Cor 12:31—13:1-13).

Charity is the fountainhead of all the other fruits of the Holy Spirit's action in us—*joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, modesty, self-control, chastity*—as St. Paul writes to the Galatians (5:22), contrasting a life lived in the Spirit with the kind of behavior that belongs to the flesh: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like" (Gal 5:19-21 RSV).

St. Paul, in this same letter, puts the matter in a nutshell: if the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct the course of our life (cf. Gal 5:25).

Devotions are said to be the temptation of the devout. True devotion to the Holy Spirit consists above all in being docile to his guidance, open to his action in us, attentive to his inspiration as he leads us to avoid evil and do good.