

The Gifts of the Spirit and Protecting Human Life

Tony Cosentino, 2008

Our life in the Spirit begins at Baptism. However, it is at Confirmation, that we receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit's gifts. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit enable us to live as full members of the Church.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit empower us to make good decisions in ethical matters. This is especially true with issues concerning human life.

By our Baptism, we are called...

- to *sa*lt the culture of our time with the flavour of the Gospel,
- to raise moral and standards – like *yeast* acting on a mass of dough, and
- to illuminate the darkness of human ignorance and greed with the *light* of faith.

The Holy Spirit's gifts given to us at Confirmation empower us to do all this and much more. Here are some ways the seven gifts help us defend life at all its stages.

Reverence/Piety:

Gives us reverence for all that is holy, especially human life, from conception until natural death.

- Every human person – from the newly conceived embryonic stage to the sick and dying – is made in the image and likeness of our God, who is all holy.

Knowledge:

Shows us who we are as beloved creatures in relation to our all powerful, loving, just, merciful and truthful God. Also shows us the value of material goods in relation to God's purposes for us.

- We do not have the right to take life or to arbitrarily end life – the gift of life is God's to give and take away.
- All of creation was made by God and placed at the service of the good of human persons. No thing comes close in value to the supreme dignity and worth of a human life.
- Knowing human life's true value in light of God's plan, we must support and nurture it at all stages: defending persons unborn, speaking out against plans to clone or conceive human persons in laboratories or Petri dishes, or to dispose of the old, sick, criminals, and dying before their time and providing comfort and support to persons who are ill and suffering.

Understanding:

Helps us understand what is true and good or evil, right and wrong in light of the Bible (Scripture) and Church Teaching (Tradition).

- Scripture and Tradition tell us that the human person at all stages of life is sacred and any attempt to destroy one human life or many human lives at any stage is morally evil.
- Scripture and Tradition also tell us that the right and proper place for human conception is in a mother's body, not in a petri dish or test tube.

Right Judgement:

Enables us to judge what needs to be done in situations that confront us. While *understanding* shows us what is right or wrong, good or evil, *right judgement* shows us how we must respond.

- The gift of *right judgement* shows us what to say or do to defend life at all its stages.

Courage/Fortitude:

Enables us to stand up and say or do what *right judgement* tells us needs to be done, and to persevere in speaking and acting in the truth even when challenged.

- God will honour our efforts to speak up to defend the value of human life. Speaking up for persons who cannot do so will save lives, change minds and hearts, and save souls. If we deny knowing Christ in the helpless and poor, will He not also do the same for us?

Wonder & Awe/Fear of the Lord: This is the gift of seeing and never wanting to be separated from the grandeur and awesome power of God who is above all and in all, whose ways are not our ways, and yet calls us through Baptism to participate in the divine life.

- Only in God are do we have the promises of a meaningful life and eternal joy. To walk with God in this life is to defend the supreme value of the human person at all times and stages, each in our own way.
- Concerns about money, war, political power or convenience all pale before the supreme value of human persons, made in God's image and likeness.

Wisdom: This is the gift of knowing God's ways, and it contains all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit. We grow in wisdom by listening attentively to the Spirit in prayer, in prayerful reading of God's word, and welcoming the Word into our hearts and lives. Jesus is the Wisdom of God made flesh. Mary, the mother of Jesus is honoured with the title Seat of Wisdom, because she listened to God's Word, and treasured it in her heart, and welcoming it into her very flesh. The wisdom of the Holy Spirit is kept alive in those who stay close to Mary and Jesus, her divine Son.

- The Spirit's gift of wisdom enables us to approach moral issues with the mind and heart of Christ, and to speak or act in defense of human persons from conception to natural death, in keeping with the Gospel and the teaching of Christ's Church.