

These are heroic character traits that Jesus Christ alone possesses in their plenitude but that he freely shares with the members of his mystical body (i.e., his Church). These traits are infused into every Christian as a permanent endowment at their baptism, nurtured by the practice of the seven virtues, and sealed in the sacrament of confirmation. They are also known as the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit, because they serve the purpose of rendering their recipients docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their lives, helping them to grow in holiness and making them fit for heaven. These gifts, according to Aquinas, are “habits,” “instincts,” or “dispositions” provided by God as supernatural helps to man in the process of his “perfection.” They enable man to transcend the limitations of human reason and human nature and participate in the very life of God, as Christ promised (John 14:23). Aquinas insisted that they are necessary for man’s salvation, which he cannot achieve on his own. They serve to “perfect” the four cardinal or moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). The virtue of charity is the key that unlocks the potential power of the seven gifts, which can (and will) lie dormant in the soul after baptism unless so acted upon.

- Bernard Kellett.

Entrance antiphon: After the Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: 28: R/ The Lord will bless his people with peace.

Second Reading: Acts 10: 34-38

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The heavens opened and the Father’s voice resounded: ‘This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him’. Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.



Baptism of the Lord, Cycle C, 2025 Weekly Reflection: Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1)

What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit? The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are, according to Catholic tradition, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude,

knowledge, piety, and fear of God. The standard interpretation has been the one that St. Thomas Aquinas worked out in the thirteenth century in his *Summa Theologiae*:

- **Wisdom** is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs according to divine truth.
- **Understanding** is penetrating insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation.
- **Counsel** allows a man to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation.
- **Fortitude** denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles, even deadly ones, by virtue of the assurance of everlasting life.
- **Knowledge** is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice.
- **Piety** is, principally, revering God with filial affection, paying worship and duty to God, paying due duty to all men on account of their relationship to God, and honouring the saints and not contradicting Scripture. The Latin word *pietas* denotes the reverence that we give to our father and to our country; since God is the Father of all, the worship of God is also called piety.
- **Fear of God** is, in this context, “filial” or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him—as opposed to “servile” fear, whereby we fear punishment.