

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St. Peter's Square
Wednesday, 9 April 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we begin a series of catechesis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You know that the Holy Spirit constitutes the soul, the life blood of the Church and of every individual Christian: He is the Love of God who makes of our hearts his dwelling place and enters into communion with us. The Holy Spirit abides with us always; he is always within us, in our hearts.

The Spirit himself is “the gift of God” par excellence (cf. Jn 4:10), he is a gift of God, and he in turn communicates various spiritual gifts to those who receive him. The Church identifies seven, a number which symbolically speaks of fullness, completeness; they are those we learn about when we prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation and which we invoke in the ancient prayer called the “Sequence of the Holy Spirit”. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

1. The first gift of the Holy Spirit according to this list is therefore wisdom. But it is not simply human wisdom, which is the fruit of knowledge and experience. In the Bible we are told that Solomon, at the time of his coronation as King of Israel, had asked for the gift of wisdom (cf. 1 Kings 3:9). And wisdom is precisely this: it is the grace of being able to see everything with the eyes of God. It is simply this: it is to see the world, to see situations, circumstances, problems, everything through God’s eyes. This is wisdom. Sometimes we see things according to our liking or according to the condition of our heart, with love or with hate, with envy.... No, this is not God’s perspective. Wisdom is what the Holy Spirit works in us so as to enable us to see things with the eyes of God. This is the gift of wisdom.

2. And obviously this comes from intimacy with God, from the intimate relationship we have with God, from the relationship children have with their Father. And when we have this relationship, the Holy Spirit endows us with the gift of wisdom. When we are in communion with the Lord, the Holy Spirit transfigures our heart and enables it to perceive all of his warmth and predilection.

3. The Holy Spirit thus makes the Christian “wise”. Not in the sense that he has an answer for everything, that he knows everything, but in the sense that he “knows” about God, he knows how God acts, he knows when something is of God and when it is not of God; he has this wisdom which God places in our hearts.

The heart of the wise man in this sense has a taste and savor for God. And how important it is that there be Christians like this in our communities! Everything in them speaks of God and becomes a beautiful and living sign of his presence and of his love. And this is something that we cannot invent, that we cannot obtain by ourselves: it is a gift that God gives to those who make themselves docile to the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit within us, in our heart; we can listen to him, we can listen to him. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, he teaches us this way of wisdom, he endows us with wisdom, which is seeing with God’s eyes, hearing with God’s ears, loving with God’s heart, directing things with God’s judgment.

This is the wisdom the Holy Spirit endows us with, and we can all have it. We only have to ask it of the Holy Spirit.

Think of a mother at her home with the children; when one does something the other thinks of something else, and the poor mother goes to and fro with the problems of her children. And when mothers get tired and scold the children, is that wisdom? Scolding children — I ask you — is this wisdom? What do you say: is it wisdom or not? No! Instead, when the mother takes her child aside and gently reproves him, saying: “Don’t do this, because...”, and explains with great patience, is this the wisdom of God? Yes! It is what the Holy Spirit gives us in life! Then, in marriage for example, the two spouses — the husband and wife — argue, and then they don’t look at each other, or if they do look at each other, they look at each other with displeasure: is this the wisdom of God? No! Instead, if one says: “Ah well, the storm has passed, let’s make peace”, and they begin again and go forward in peace: is this wisdom? [The people: Yes!] Now, this is the gift of wisdom. May it come to our homes, may we have it with the children, may it come to us all!

And this cannot be learned: this is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must ask the Lord to grant us the Holy Spirit and to grant us the gift of wisdom, that wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God’s eyes, to feel with God’s heart, to speak with God’s words. And so, with this wisdom, let us go forward, let us build our family, let us build the Church, and we will all be sanctified. Today let us ask for this grace of wisdom. And let us ask Our Lady, who is the Seat of Wisdom, for this gift: may she give us this grace. Thank you!