The Holy Spirit 101

Pentecost, which we celebrate this weekend, marks the gift of the Holy Spirit and also the culmination of the Easter Season. But it's a bit of a hard feast to get a grasp on. When we think of the Holy Spirit, what comes to mind? A dove? Fire? Wind? These are the images the Bible gives us, but while we invoke the Holy Spirit at each Mass, I wonder if we really know who we are praying to.

Talking about the Holy Spirit would take a long time, but in a nutshell, I think of the Spirit like fuel helping us to go forward in our lives as Christians.

For one, there are the virtues we are given by the Spirit. Some we have by being human: justice, courage, temperance and charity; others we are given through baptism: faith, hope and love.

The Spirit also gives us fruits and gifts to grow in these virtues.

As a refresher, following are what we call "Fruits of the Spirit" (taken from Fr. Michael Van Sloun's article in *The Catholic Spirit*):

Love. Agape love is the highest form of love, love for both God and neighbor. It is selfless, focused on the other person, given freely and gladly without condition or the expectation of repayment, expressed in service, and willing to suffer on another's behalf.

Joy. Joy is an interior contentment that comes from being close to God and in right relationship with others. Joy also comes with speaking and upholding the truth, honesty and integrity in relationships, enduring hardships and decent conduct. Joy isn't fake happiness. It's an authentic peace that comes from a life of prayer, and peace with others.

Peace. Peace is the harmony that occurs when justice prevails. It happens when resources are shared equitably, power is used for service, interdependence is fostered, information is shared openly and honestly, the dignity of each person is respected, legitimate differences are tolerated, the disadvantaged receive help, hurts are forgiven and the common good is upheld.

Patience. Patience is the virtue of suffering interruption or delay with composure and without complaint; to suffer annoyance, insult or mistreatment with self-restraint, refusing to be provoked; and to suffer burdens and difficult tasks with resolve and determination. It is also the willingness to slow down for another's benefit, to set aside one's personal plans and concerns, to go at another's pace, and to take whatever time is necessary to address their need.

Kindness is a warm and friendly disposition toward another. A kind person is polite and well mannered, respectful and considerate, pleasant and agreeable, cheerful and upbeat, caring and helpful, positive and complimentary.

Generosity. Generosity is a big-heartedness grounded in an abundance mentality. It is unselfish and expresses itself in sharing. It is extended to family and friends, strangers, and particularly those in need, and is offered not only as money, food and clothing, but also as time shared and assistance provided.

Faithfulness. Faithfulness is demonstrated by loyalty to friends, duties performed, promises kept, commitments fulfilled, contracts completed, vows observed and being true to one's word.

Gentleness. Gentleness is sensitivity for another person. It is concerned with another's welfare, safety and security. It is grounded in humility. The approach is careful, tender, considerate, affectionate and mild-mannered, free of all pushiness, roughness or abrasiveness.

Self-control. Self-control is self-mastery regardless of the circumstances, to be in control of one's self rather than to be controlled by temptations, events or other people, especially when under pressure or in times of crisis. It is to remain calm, cool and collected, reasonable and even-tempered; to be alert and conscious, to proceed with caution and prudence, and to avoid an impulse or knee-jerk response; to be a moderating influence; and to have the strength and courage to reject evil and choose good.

There are also the Gifts of the Spirit (taken from Catholic Answers website)

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—in effect, the ability to "see" God.

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 honoring 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.

Lastly, to these I'd add the Spirit is who helps us move forward and change. When we are open to the guidance of the Spirit, we see the good changes brought about over the centuries in our Church as the Church is helped by the Spirit to understand Revelation at a deeper level. But the Holy Spirit also helps to guide us as individuals; the Holy Spirit helped me discern my call to priesthood, and helps people answer questions large and small from careers to vocations to trying new things or making changes in their lives.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit does so much for us and our Church. What an incredible gift we are given when the Spirit, the outpouring of the love between Father and Son that is given to us all to help us grow in holiness.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

God bless,

Fr. Paul

P.S. A heartfelt congratulations to our graduating 8th grade class this Sunday, and a big thank you to Mrs. Kelly Roche our principal and Mr. Terry Hale, 8th grade teacher and our staff for their hard work. Let us pray the Holy Spirit continues to guide and strengthen our graduates as they discern their vocations, and continues to pour out His blessings upon our school helping to guide and strengthen our faculty in their vocations.