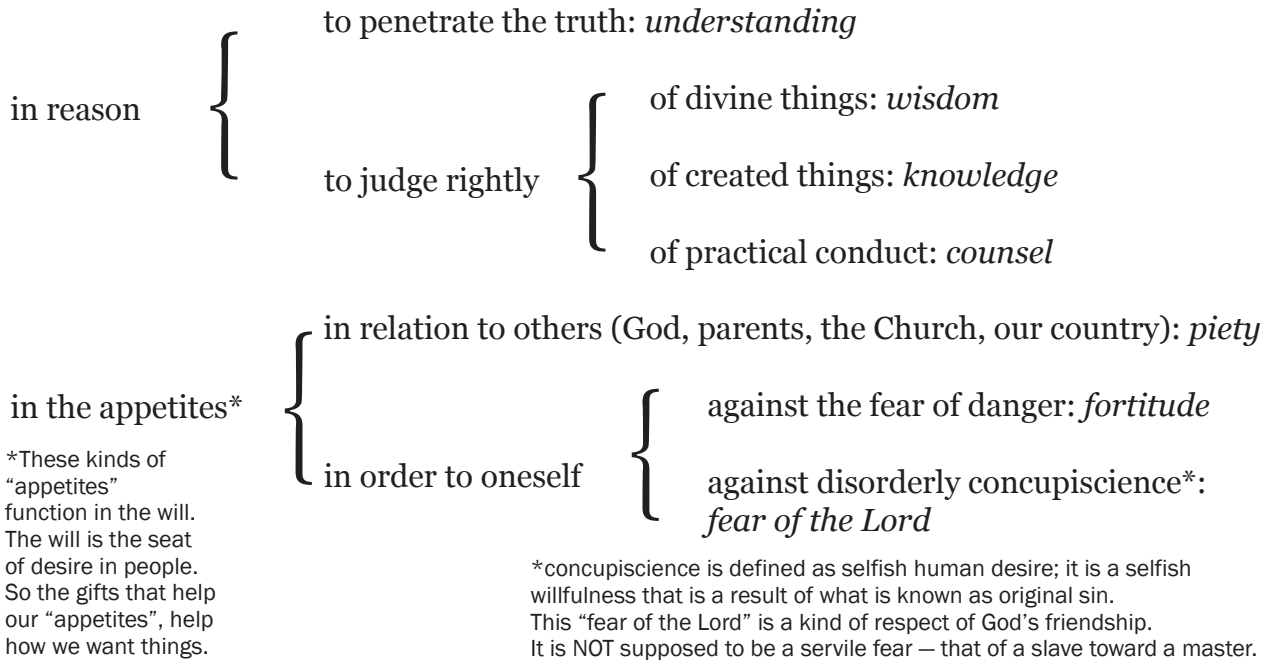


THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



We are *designed* naturally as humans to use the power of our reason. We are "rational" beings. Personal development is an integrated process where, over time, we grow in our bodies, our intellect and all our human goods together.

Human growth can also be called maturity. As we mature, we are more capable in lots of different areas of our life and, we are more able to serve others. What I tell our young people is that *maturity is our capacity to serve others and the degree to which we conscientiously serve.*

We mature by growing in virtue in accord with reason. Virtues are good qualities of our character. Virtues are evidence of God's goodness in us. Some virtues grow because we use the rational power in us to choose to develop aspects of goodness like patience. But some virtues are actual gifts from God. God offers gifts to us to *help us grow* in the use of reason, in our ability to love, and the control our appetites (self control).

These gifts are alive in us as gifts to the extent that we live in charity. Charity is the theological word for love. In charity, we love what God loves and as he loves. When we really love God and live as he calls us to, he gives us gifts of his Holy Spirit.

In the widest sense, the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit himself. The Holy Spirit is the living love of God; the love he has for himself and for us. If we live in charity — in the graced love of God — we possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we

do not live in charity, we do not have these gifts. Usually this works in us by degrees: the more charity, the more these gifts are at work to help us be understanding, wise, knowledgeable...etc.

Again, *without* charity, one may develop many *natural* virtues. That is to say, it is possible for people to have many of these qualities on a natural level as opposed to a supernatural level.

It is possible to grow in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, if we learn how to become sensitive to the presence of these distinctive virtues and if we live in a cooperative spirit with God.

We usually need to be in a state of grace to receive these gifts and it also *helps* if we know where we are weak (self knowledge). Therefore, sacramental Confession becomes an important way to open ourselves to receive spiritual gifts.

Another way to activate these virtues more is to pray. In prayer, we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit and we are docile, we are easy to work with. In prayer, we listen to God. Asking for more of certain virtues also helps. But these things are infused gifts. What I mean is some of these gifts occur spontaneously in prayer. For example, we might be wrestling with some truth of the faith and the Holy Spirit will simply give us wisdom and insight because we are asking the Lord. We can trust that God will increase piety in us (or whatever gifts we need). The gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to mature, to grow in Christ-likeness.

The chart is Fr. Antonio Royo Marin's analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas' connection of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the soul from Part I-II, question 68 of the *Summa Theologica*.