

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



## A Column by Fr. Tom

### **Gifts of the Holy Spirit – Part 1: Wisdom – Knowledge Speaks, but Wisdom Listens [Jimi Hendrix].**

During the season of Easter, we explored the various Theological and Cardinal Virtues. These Virtues were expressed as part of our Life in Christ. It is, after all, Christ who epitomizes all of the Virtues. As we move now to the period of time after Pentecost, it is appropriate to begin to discuss Life in the Holy Spirit. As God is One and the Holy Spirit is also known as the Spirit of Christ, we are actually just adding to our discussion of Life in Christ with this discussion of Life in the Spirit. In fact, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* says, “[The Gifts of the Holy Spirit] belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. [cf. IS 11:1] They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them.” [CCC, 1831]

According to the Catechism, “The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord.” [Ibid, cf. IS 11:2] Since these gifts are gifts from God, they help us to participate in the Divine Life, just as the Virtues do. Also, because these gifts are from God, they have a theological purpose and definition. In other words, we may find, as we did for the Virtues, that the common definitions of these words differ from the theological and Catechetical definition.

Wisdom is known as the first and highest of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The rest of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit point to or spring from Wisdom. The source of Wisdom is of course God, and any wisdom that human beings possess comes from God. We have several examples of Wisdom

given from God in the Scriptures, but perhaps the most famous is the Wisdom of Solomon.

“Moreover, God gave Solomon wisdom, exceptional understanding, and knowledge, as vast as the sand on the seashore.” [1 Kings 5:9. See also 1 Kings 3:5-14]

The common definition of “wisdom” is “good sense or judgment.” [Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Wisdom”] However, the Catholic definition of Wisdom is not a matter of the mind, but instead it is a matter of the heart. The Gift of Wisdom affects moral discernment, as well as simple “good sense.” We know from previous studies that when we speak about the moral life and the virtues associated with it, we are speaking above all about love. Therefore, Wisdom is more than “good sense or judgment.” It is a Gift from God out of His Love. Wisdom, therefore, draws us back to God, and to His Love. When we judge Wisdom based on love, we are judging Wisdom in the same way that God does, instead of how human beings do. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes of the wisest act of God (the Paschal Mystery) when he says, “[We] proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” [1 Cor 1:23-25] God’s wisdom is love, so the Gift of Wisdom is a gift of love.

Next week, we will examine the related Gift of Understanding.

