

## HOLY SPIRIT GRACE AND FRUIT

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Some time ago I attended the funeral of my aunt, who was called home by the Lord at the age of 105! That in itself was rather remarkable - well below one percent of the population ever reach that age. What was every bit if not more remarkable was the way that virtually everyone described her, invariably using the word "grace" or "gracious." The eulogy given at her service focused on the fruit of the Holy Spirit evident in her very long life. The eulogist was clear in emphasizing that bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit is only possible by the grace of God - literally! But at the same time, fruit does take some cultivation on our part to grow, ripen, and manifest itself. Let's take a brief look at the fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

### FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Love** - The Greek word is *agape*, the word used in Scripture for God's own love for us. It is an unselfish, self-giving, unconditional love.

**Joy** - This is the joy of the Holy Spirit, only possible by the grace of the Holy Spirit and especially needed in the face of trials and difficulties.

**Peace** - True peace comes from our relationship with God. Peace with God is necessary to have the peace of God within our hearts, and to have peace with others.

**Patience** - The original word in Greek means having a "great temper," or we would say, a "long fuse" - as opposed to having a "quick temper" or "short fuse." Other descriptions would be forbearance or longsuffering - the ability to endure ill-treatment and/or difficult circumstances.

**Kindness** - Synonyms would be sweetness, helpfulness, goodness in action, benevolence, affability - the ability to do good to others who do not treat you well. It means being compassionate, considerate, sympathetic and not insisting on having your own way.

**Goodness** - A better translation might actually be **generosity**, giving of your goods, time, and service to others. This trait truly resembles God Himself, who is all-good, all-generous, and self-giving.

**Faith** - Another and perhaps better translation would be **faithfulness** or reliability - the ability to be counted on to fulfill your promises and take care of your responsibilities.

**Meekness** - Also translated as gentleness, the best definition is "strength under control." Imagine your emotions, especially anger, as being strong horses pulling a carriage. As long as the horses are under control and "reined in," they are helpful and useful. If emotions are left unchecked, however, they become like wild horses, unable to help or serve anyone. Meekness is not weakness, but rather power under control.

**Self-control** - Much like the previous word, self-control enables us to master ourselves, especially our speech, as well as our desires for food, drink and pleasure. Self-control is the key to emotional maturity and stability.

### ACQUIRING THE FRUIT

The only way to acquire the fruit of the Holy Spirit is by receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit and living a life in the Holy Spirit - that is to say, a life of prayer, Scripture reading, the sacraments, and self-denial or "crucifying the flesh." Since "all is grace," we would do well to sincerely and tenaciously ask that grace from the Holy Spirit. There is an ancient prayer of the Church entitled, "To Acquire the Grace of the Holy Spirit," which is highly recommended:

**O God, to whom every heart is open,**

**and every wish speaks like a word,  
and from whom nothing is hidden;  
purify the thoughts of our hearts  
by the infusion of the Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily praise you.  
Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.**